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ABSTRACT

The Annenberg Rural Challenge represents a large national effort to transform rural schools and communities. Among its dominant themes are that students should come to know their local communities well, that communities should see schools and students as critical assets, and that communities and schools need to become more integrated. As part of a 4-year longitudinal evaluation, this report focuses on student work in schools receiving Rural Challenge grants and the connection of student work to local communities. The first section conceptualizes a pedagogy of place and examines the range and diversity of student work seen in Rural Challenge sites. This range and diversity is defined around the following characteristics: connection to place; complexity; students' development of expertise as technologists, as environmental scientists, and as genuine citizens; and importance to the community in terms of response to community needs, development of student leadership, work with enduring qualities, and changes in community expectations of schools. A section on mutuality describes how diverse groups in Rural Challenge communities are coming together around common goals and working to enhance quality of life and a local future for young people. A section on expanding the "work of place," discusses barriers to expanding the role of local context in the curriculum and the ways in which some sites have changed these constraints into opportunities. Appendices include the evaluation plan, methodology, and a list of Rural Challenge sites. (SV)

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LIVING AND LEARNING in Rural Schools and Communities

A REPORT TO THE ANNENBERG RURAL CHALLENGE

RURAL CHALLENGE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PROGRAM/
HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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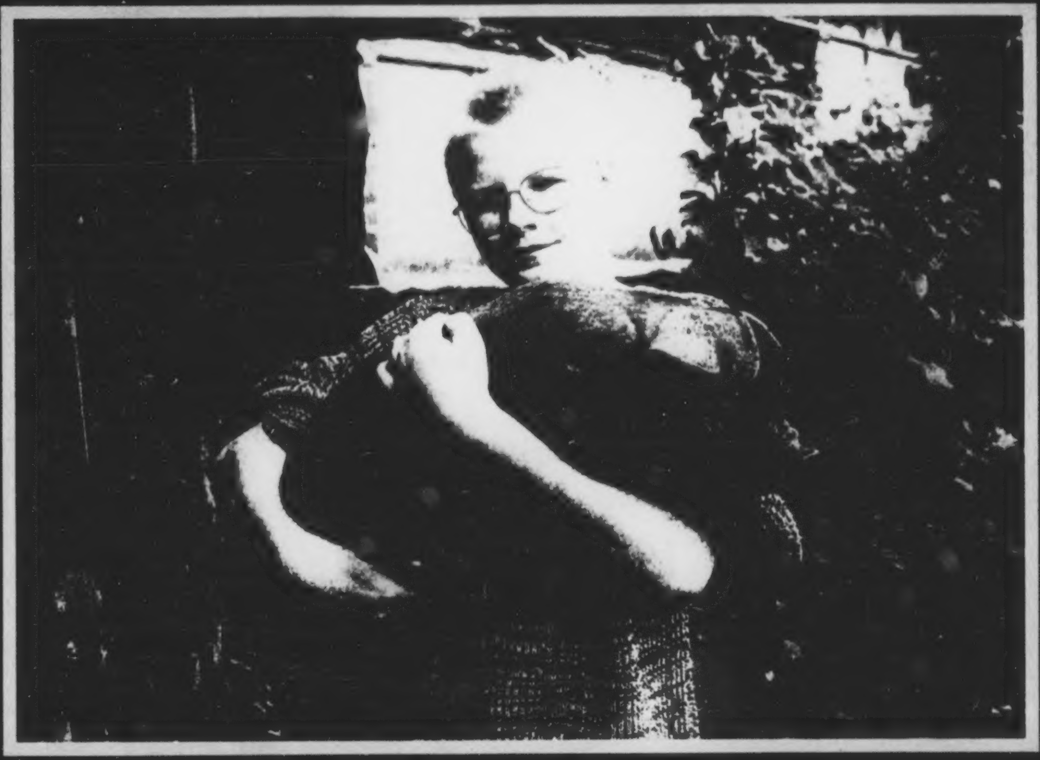

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RURAL CHALLENGE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PROGRAM
HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

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DEDICATED TO THE MANY TEACHERS,
STUDENTS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITY PEOPLE
WHO ARE ENGAGED IN THE WORK
OF THE RURAL CHALLENGE

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Preface

It is a pleasure having an opportunity to present another report on the Annenberg Rural Challenge. In doing so, however, I am conscious once more of the different ways that Research and Evaluation are being carried out across the various Annenberg Challenges, in particular those relating to urban environments, as well as in other education projects with which I am familiar. I have been asked more than once, for example, how do you define your approach to the Rural Challenge work? If it is evaluation, shouldn't you be making more firm judgments about whether the Rural Challenge is working or not working, offering more direct recommendations about how to improve the work?

For purposes of context, it might be useful to describe my personal view of the work we are engaged in as a means of helping readers understand more fully why the report has assumed its particular form, why the stories of teachers, students, parents and community people have come to matter so much. I will begin with some history.

Paul Nachtigal, the Rural Challenge's National Co-Director, a person with whom I had worked closely in the 1970s and 1980s on rural education issues, called me in February 1996 and inquired about my willingness to direct the Research and Evaluation Program of the Rural Challenge. While making clear to him that I had considerable interest in the ideas associated with the Rural Challenge and believed that I could contribute to the philosophical and pedagogical base of the Rural Challenge's large hopes for schools and communities, I also noted my limited time and already too full set of commitments to a large number of students, several Boston schools, and an expanding research and writing agenda. Paul was, however, persistent, always believing that I could organize a Rural Challenge effort that would be productive and not take "too much of my time." Even as I said I didn't think it was feasible, I didn't absolutely close off the possibility.

I agreed to attend, on behalf of the Rural Challenge, a meeting in Washington, D.C. with the National Science Foundation in May 1996 to discuss evaluation issues. (I brought to the meeting four colleagues whom I believed might be helpful if I did decide to work with the Rural Challenge.) Because the National Science Foundation was involved in several Rural Systemic Reform Initiatives, there was some interest in seeing if the National Science Foundation and the Rural Challenge might come together and engage in joint evaluation work. The meeting was interesting but it was also clear that the NSF design for evaluation was highly circumscribed around a number of predetermined categories, mostly quantitative, almost fully school-based and not sufficiently context-specific to be particularly attractive to me or the Rural Challenge leadership. I recommended that the Rural Challenge develop its own evaluation process, more connected to its unique purposes.

In July 1996, I indicated to Paul that I would work out a way to do the Research and Evaluation work, though my personal time would have to be minimal during the academic year and fuller in the summers. (It never really worked out this neatly.) As a way of getting closer to the thinking of the Rural Challenge Board and some of its various constituencies, and help me think more about the shape that a Research and Evaluation effort might take, I facilitated for the Board a philosophically-oriented discussion in August 1996 (in Granby, CO) about "the purposes of schools" alongside the question "whom should schools serve?" I was genuinely surprised by what I heard. The dominant themes of the discussion were: students should come to know their local communities well; see in the local circumstances a history of consequence and ongoing possibilities; understand that real choices exist in adulthood; that conservation, a sense of sustainability of resources, values and cultures is important; that schools and communities need to be seen more as one, not as separate entities. There was also a strong belief expressed that the role of the school needs redefinition and creating this redefinition will demand enlarged community dialogue and active leadership. The understanding that parents and community people have lost considerable control of their schools was widespread. So much that was expressed matched well my own philosophical stance on education and my views about the importance of small schools, active learning, students as citizens/resources, local decision-making, building curriculum around things that matter locally, and community, family and school integration.

The ideas expressed by board members were, in educational-political terms, progressive and democratic. They suggested educational directions that go beyond typical practices. I came away impressed by board members' articulateness about educational and community development issues as well as by the fairly radical nature of the ideas, wondering if the schools and communities receiving grants would, in fact, be in a similar place. As I began to read the various proposals that had been solicited by the Rural Challenge, it seemed clear that there were some major gaps alongside large hopes. The inspiring language expressed by Rural Challenge board members was not the language of most proposals—though I understood why this was the case. Written mostly by those in schools, they mirrored many of the constancies that schools find difficult to discard.

Not unsurprisingly, almost from the outset, we found ourselves as a Research and Evaluation Group serving as interpreters and catalysts, helping sites understand more fully the large hopes of the Rural Challenge, providing fuller definitions of what it might mean to focus on place, use the community as an educational venue, engage in genuine work. In many respects, we have played an important role in giving the Rural Challenge some of its critical language. We have intentionally continued to serve this educating, explicating role—through our reports, frequent telephone and email conversations with Rural Challenge teachers, administrators and community people and face-to-face interactions at national and regional meetings of Rural Challenge participants.

What does all of this mean for the actual work of Research and Evaluation? (We include as Appendix A, a summary of our Research and Evaluation design that was developed through considerable interaction with the Rural Challenge Board.) First, I have long been attracted to Michael Patton's definition of "developmental evaluation," an understanding that being in the activity under examination is essential, aware that every question asked has an influence on how the project work develops (something that is, of course, the case however evaluation is conceptualized). Such a view accepts the understanding that the large goals, in this case of the Rural Challenge, always need to be seen as things to *work toward*, that conversation along the way is always constructive, that the stories of those closest to the work in schools and communities are the critical stories, and the work of evaluation is always designed to inform, educate, help move the work forward, thus assisting the "working toward" formulation. It is always less about judgment than about telling the story well, providing a basis for ongoing conversation, for decision-making about next steps by those who are actually doing the work day in and day out.

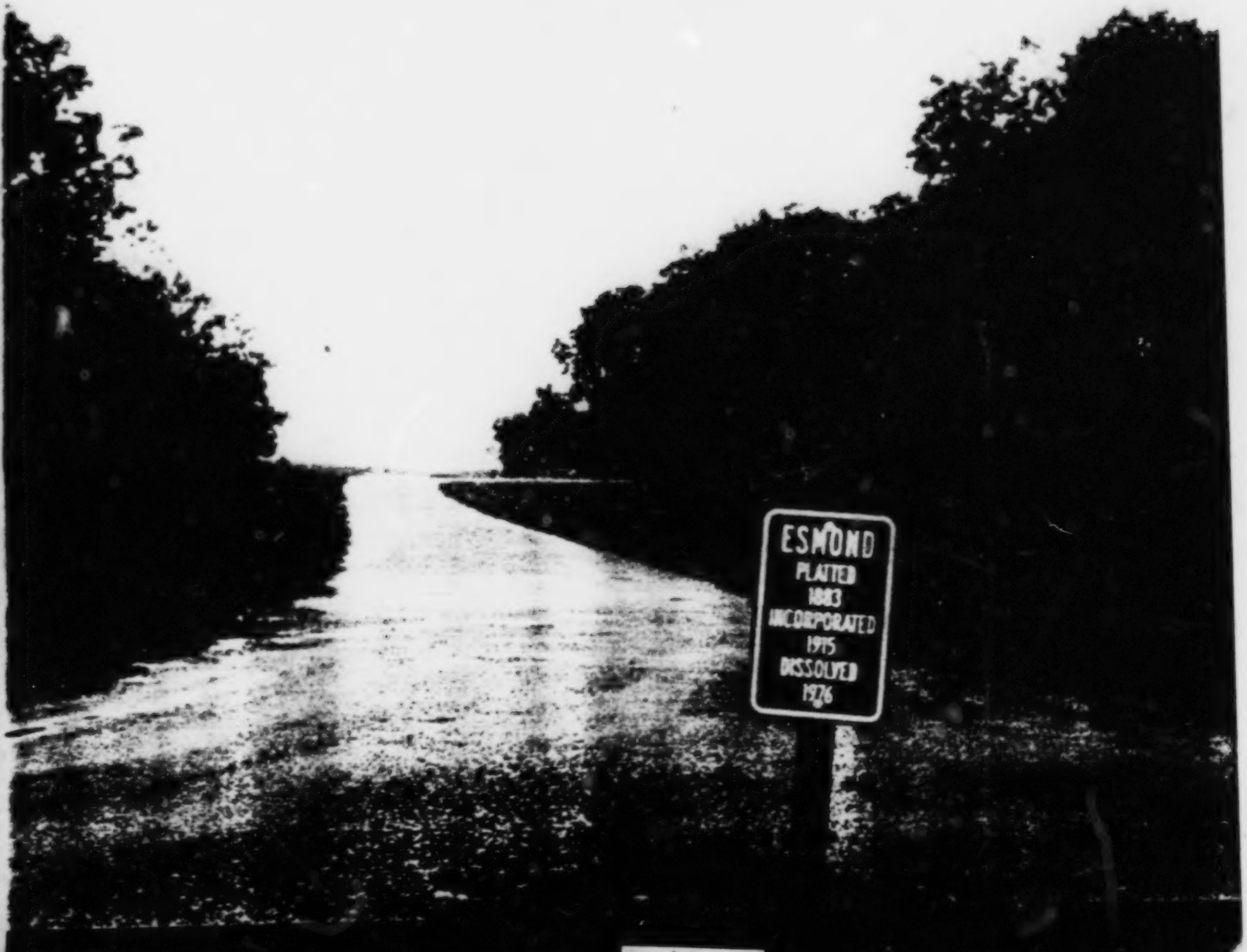
I am personally an advocate of the progressive orientation of the Rural Challenge, committed to the kinds of schools and communities being promoted. I believe that we have a responsibility to use our reports as a means for enlarging the work, inspiring participants to see additional possibilities, and raising additional questions. I have, in every Rural Challenge setting I am in, intentionally enlarged on the language of place, located the work of the Rural Challenge in historical perspective, argued for a pedagogy that helps students engage in genuine work that relates to the world beyond schools, that contributes something important to their communities. In this regard the work is related to *commonwealth* as this term has been understood historically.

It needs also to be said that I wouldn't have agreed to work on the research and evaluation of any other project I currently know about. I say this to make clear the extent of my personal investment. This places on me and the researchers I have brought into the work a responsibility to probe deeply the work of the Rural Challenge, tell its story well, describe through local accounts where it is making reasonable progress and what is keeping some settings from making good progress, and provide the kind of reflection that will challenge the Rural Challenge to go further, become more clear, develop more helpful strategies, be in a better position to build the national movement which it wants to have in place long after the Annenberg funding is gone.

Considerable progress has been made in the Rural Challenge. Teachers and community people believe the Rural Challenge, as a focused national activity, has provided ideas which are useful, been encouraging of locally based work, given them some cover and some courage, has supported interchange. They want more. They desire more clarity around the ideas. They want additional opportunities to share their work and learn from others. They want to see the kind of work they are doing validated more in the public discourse about education. Right now, they are convinced that it is not valued much beyond the Rural Challenge. My hope is that this report and others to follow will contribute to a greater sense of efficacy in the sites and will help move the work to even more productive, more fully embedded levels.

In closing this preface, I want to acknowledge my colleagues who have contributed heavily to every aspect of this report; namely, Miles Bryant, Julie Canniff, Mary Casey, Scott Christian, Candace Cochrane, Carla Fontaine, Richard Landry, Bob Leier, Dennis Shirley, Lauren Sosniak, Evangeline Stefanakis, Connie Titone, Polly Ulichny, Ben Williams, and Doug Wood. They were involved in planning, doing field studies, conducting focus group discussions and individual interviews at Regional Research and Evaluation Convocations and National Rural Challenge gatherings and working at data analysis and writing. I want also to acknowledge all the teachers, school administrators, project directors, students, parents and community people associated with Rural Challenge sites who so generously and enthusiastically shared with us their stories. Many also maintained portfolios, wrote extensive accounts of their work and sent us a variety of films, photographs and reflective essays. They have to be seen as co-researchers. Without them and their extraordinary commitments we could not have produced a report of consequence. I wish also to thank Paul Nachtigal and Toni Haas, co-directors of the Rural Challenge, the Rural Challenge Stewards and members of the Rural Challenge Board for their constant support and encouragement.

Vito Perrone
Cambridge, Massachusetts
February 1999


ESMOND
PLATTED
1883
INCORPORATED
1915
DISSOLVED
1976

Introduction

A RURAL STORY

We first heard about Esmond over in Howard, about twenty miles to the southeast. It is about six miles west of Route 25, one of the first north-south automotive routes in eastern South Dakota. Esmond had a two-story school house, a hotel, farm implement supplier, a gas station, two churches and twenty five or so houses. It was a prosperous little village; its history stretches back beyond the coming of the railroad to a remote trading post and a group of homesteaders scattered on the prairie in sod huts.

We missed the local road to Esmond off of Route 25 and were in De Smet, childhood home of Laura Ingalls Wilder, before we realized we'd gone by it. We tried again to find Esmond, this time coming from the north. Looking across the prairie, we could see a cluster of trees and the tell-tale marker of Midwestern economic prowess, the grain elevator. On our way into town, we could see the meandering outline of the creek and the old rail trestle crossing it. We could still follow the abandoned rail bed as we looked towards the elevator. A half mile more and we left the county road taking our first left onto Main Street in Esmond proper.

We slowed as we entered town but not for a speed limit, merging traffic or even a pedestrian warning. There was no one around. Esmond was gone. A stark sign greeted us on the dirt track that was once Main Street.

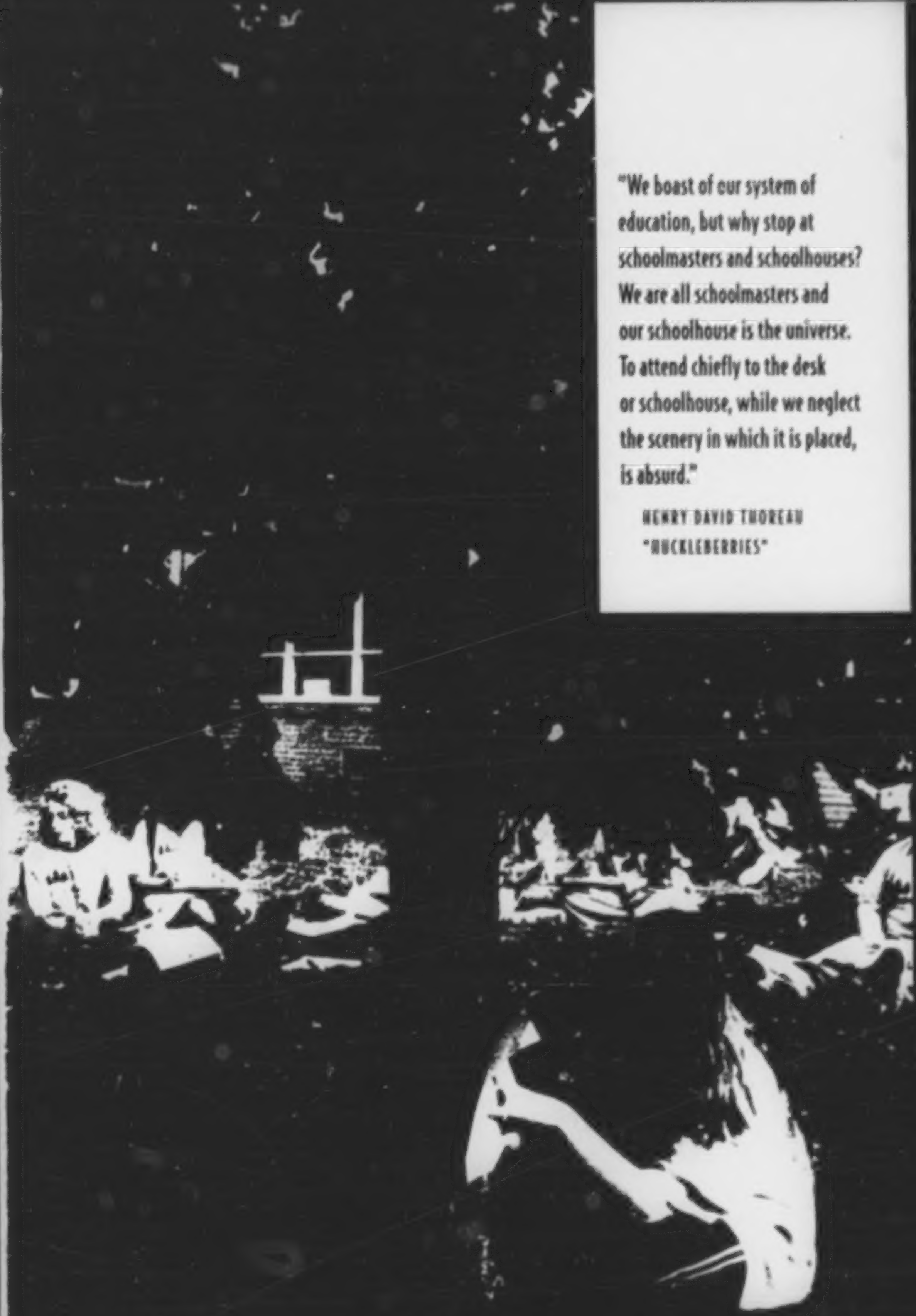
Esmond
Platted, 1883
Incorporated, 1915
Dissolved, 1976

The current population is three. Still standing in town are the grain elevator, the United Methodist Church and two houses on either end of Main Street. In between are the empty house lots filled with overgrown prairie grass, occasionally broken by a flowering crab, a honeysuckle vine or twisting wisteria gone wild. In spite of the emptiness, it is not hard to imagine the sound of children, train cars lined up at the siding or even the smell of asphalt blending with the sweetness of the flowers.

This afternoon there is a lone meadowlark, the wind and a small green sign every twenty feet down both sides of Main Street commemorating a business or residence, listing the families or owners and their history. Sixty-five of these signs are sandwiched between the two existing residences. This is all that is left of Esmond, South Dakota.

The power of seeing Esmond is not in its misfortune but in its emptiness. It is more haunting than an archeological ruin because the date Esmond was dissolved is within recent memory. The failure of local economies is, we know, as much a part of American rural life as are the enduring values of hard work, self-sufficiency and creativity that are embodied in the ideal of the noble farmer. This basic dichotomy exists within the lives and mentalities of Rural Challenge participants and their communities. It is the fear of the one and the pride in the other that have brought people from a variety of rural places to the Rural Challenge and its large hopes for sustainability.

Most American rural areas are no longer isolated in the same way that they were a century ago when geography was a more potent barrier. Modernity has by no means eliminated geography but it has relaxed the grip of distance. The contemporary rural world is both modern and rural. Looking at many rural American homes and schools with satellite dishes and web-linked computers, it becomes obvious that rural is more than the archaic descriptions that have long existed, more than the silicon and steel of the material world. The memory of rural places as isolating and promises of better opportunity elsewhere are the backdrop which is always present, against which so much of the Rural Challenge work seems to stand.



"We boast of our system of education, but why stop at schoolmasters and schoolhouses? We are all schoolmasters and our schoolhouse is the universe. To attend chiefly to the desk or schoolhouse, while we neglect the scenery in which it is placed, is absurd."

HENRY DAVID THOREAU
"HUCKLEBERRIES"

The Large Goals of the Rural Challenge

The Annenberg Rural Challenge represents a large national effort to transform rural schools and communities—though the principal entry point to date has been within schools.[1] Among the dominant themes are that students should come to know their local communities well, that communities see the schools and students as critical assets and that communities and schools need to become more integrated.

To make these foregoing purposes clearer, it might be helpful to set the Rural Challenge's large hopes against the discourse of school reform that currently fills our legislative halls, provides school administrators and local school boards a popular agenda, supplies a lively grist for the various media, and is attracting considerable public interest. Within this prevailing discourse, school reform has come to mean mostly what occurs *within* schools—around curriculum requirements, standards and tests. It is focused on content that groups external to schools believe "should be" taught and learned as well as ways that schools and teachers can be held accountable for that carefully delineated content.

In its current form, school reform is being framed within the language of "systemic change," an understanding that reform should lead to clearly expressed policies and structures that "assure" a focus on teaching and learning associated with well articulated sets of curriculum frameworks and assessment systems that relate to all students and all teachers within all schools. In some regards, this is a response to a perceived history of reform activities in which *some* teachers in *some* schools are moved to higher levels of performance but most teachers and schools are left behind.

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[1] The expectation is that over time there will be a greater balance, a sign of enlarged mutuality, with as much leadership coming from members of the community as from the schools. The Rural Challenge, making use of scouts, sought out sites interested in this set of philosophical ideas about the importance of place. A site that proposed primarily to increase test scores of school children by 10 percent, or even 50 percent, did not get much attention from the Rural Challenge. A site that outlined its work as building powerful community-school integration, using the local environment, its physical, economic, cultural, linguistic and historical resources as a base for curriculum in the schools, seeing community people as important educators and its many institutions as educating agencies, seeing students in the schools as genuine resources for sustaining and revitalizing the local community, encouraging local people to understand, *in fact*, that the schools belong to them, received, on the other hand, considerable attention from the Rural Challenge.

This particular view of "systemic change" has encouraged many states and local school systems to adopt more precise grade-by-grade content specifications, more course requirements and tests that measure achievement against those specifications and requirements, with a variety of sanctions being applied for "low" levels of performance. Students not meeting the standards, as measured by one or another test, are being retained, sent to summer school programs, denied graduation from high school or regular high school diplomas. Further, schools in which student results are deemed unsatisfactory, increasingly face reconstitution. Those supporting this kind of "systemic change" argue that the purpose of the various requirements, tests and related sanctions is not to cause harm, to create failures, but to put in place serious programs and policies that will ultimately assure success for all students and schools.[2]

We cite the foregoing, albeit abbreviated, account to provide a context in which to place the Rural Challenge. From its inception, the Rural Challenge has had a contrary view. It has never seen its work so exclusively about schools; it has not been enamored by any of the centralizing directions; it has been opposed to most efforts to standardize curriculum and pedagogy; it has never put much stock in standardized tests. As a core principle, the Rural Challenge has argued that communities *and* schools are the educating institutions in rural settings, that schools are one among *many* intentional educational venues, that "systemic change" must mean schools *and* communities getting better together. Moreover, there is strong support in the Rural Challenge for democratic localism—that understanding that those who live and work in particular community settings are in the best position to determine what is most appropriate educationally, that it is possible through genuine community debate, which involves all citizens (and children and young people of school age are also seen as citizens), to set constructive educational directions leading to healthier communities.[3]

The theory of action[4] that provided initial guidance to the work of the Rural Challenge is rooted in the belief that rural schools can be important centers for the revitalization of rural communities and democratic traditions by:

- Ensuring a genuine reciprocity in school-community relationships whereby schools serve their communities, students add value to their education through service to their communities, and parents and community members are in educating roles;
- Providing parents and community members a vision of education that embraces them as partners and trustees of a more rural, personal and powerful mode of education; and
- Providing students a distinctive curriculum of place that enables them to understand the history and cultural base of their rural settings while creating possibilities for a productive life both within and beyond their environments.

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[2] For those who have followed school reform efforts over time, the current directions have a centralizing quality, even as the rhetoric of decentralization continues—that individual schools are the focal points, the places in which reform must go on. Critics argue that these current reform directions may produce short term gains in test scores but do little to further consequential learning.

[3] To some degree, the Rural Challenge's stance represents a challenge to the long history of large scale consolidation of schools. Those actively engaged in the Rural Challenge do not believe that such efforts have produced to any significant degree greater efficiencies, lower costs or better education. (Currently, the Rural Challenge Policy Program is engaged in additional studies relating to consolidation and its effects.) Rural Challenge participants hope that their efforts to reconnect schools and communities, in effect to recontextualize education, might stop the social, cultural and economic erosion caused by consolidations which have moved control further and further away, mostly to the bureaucracies of state governments and the large social, cultural and economic entities of our urban centers and national/international corporate structures. Against this history of erosion, the Rural Challenge points to the possibilities for reconstructing, revitalizing and reclaiming rural communities and their long-standing values of community, democracy and caring for the natural environment.

[4] Each of the Annenberg Challenges is guided by a *Theory of Action.* In effect, it is designed as a set of goals around which to engage practice as well as to evaluate practice.

While funding for sites in the Rural Challenge Grants program has been tied mostly to schools, the Rural Challenge has always been clear that the work is about more than schools.[5] While the Theory of Action certainly reflects this view, it is apparent that *community* has begun to assume even greater centrality than the Theory of Action suggests.[6]

If we were to formulate the overarching question that *now* stands at the heart of the Rural Challenge, it would be: **How are rural communities and schools growing together?** This question suggests mutuality, a belief in the importance of sustainability. In the Annenberg effort as a whole, the dominating language is "systemic reform of the schools." In the Rural Challenge, as we have noted, that is an insufficient formulation. When "systemic reform" is used within the Rural Challenge, it means communities **and** schools, the understanding that both are "growing" and genuinely serving human needs and interests.[7]

The Rural Challenge is, then, in metaphorical terms, a program of investment in rural communities and schools. From the standpoint of evaluation as well as research, we have been asking: Is this investment making a difference? Are communities and schools enlarging their levels of interchange? Are students being seen increasingly as resources to the community, becoming more invested in the well-being of the community? Are community people assuming larger educating roles in the schools, beyond the schools? Is more of what students do in school related to the community? Is there greater optimism about the community as a place to live and work? Are attitudes about "being in this place" and "being from this place" growing more positive? Much of this report revolves around these questions.

While we include as Appendix A a description of our Research and Evaluation design, we wish to note here that it has five basic threads—Student Learning, the Schooling Process, Community-School Integration, Networks and Clusters and Public Policy. Given our view that Community-School Integration was the Rural Challenge's central focus during the initial year, we made that the subject of our November 1997 report, though we defined "integration" as the idea and used "exchange" as the way the relationship was playing out. During this 1997–98 year, we have focused our attention on Student Work, its shape, directions, special qualities and potential, though we have sought to capture its connection to the local community. By extension, we have also continued our exploration of the exchange between communities and schools. Through an emphasis on student work, we believed we could get closer to the schooling process, enlarge understandings of a pedagogy/curriculum of place and its effects on student learning and provide a variety of examples that might help Rural Challenge participants see larger possibilities for their work. Our role, after all, is largely educative.[8]

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5. We noted in our November 1997 report that there was considerable pressure to make grants to ensure that the Annenberg funds were committed within the initial three-four years of the five year funding cycle. Had the time frame been different, ten years rather than five, the grant process could have been slowed down, possibly giving rise to more community organized efforts, with schools less dominant.

6. In light of the enlarged emphasis on the community, we focused our November 1997 report on *Community-School Exchange* as that seemed to emerge over the 1996–97 year as particularly generative, if not the project's central idea. In this regard, we wrote in our November 1997 report: "We have chosen to focus our attention in this report on *community-school exchange*, principally as this has become over the year the central focus of the Rural Challenge. This focus was not so clear one year ago as the Rural Challenge grant-making process was initiated. While 'a pedagogy of place' was a principal tenet of the Rural Challenge, it was not a clearly understood conception in the various Rural Challenge sites. By giving our attention to community-school exchange, it seems that we can help clarify the potential of this idea, mostly through sharing work in various Rural Challenge sites that contributes to its successful embodiment in practice."

7. Over the course of the past year, and most emphatically at the 1998 Rendezvous in Granby, the Rural Challenge Board and the co-directors began to formulate more fully their vision of systemic reform, a conception that includes at its core an integration of schools and communities. While the basic idea has always been present, it took the experience of observing work in various sites, mostly given direction by those in schools and involving many short-term activities and projects, to understand that a clearer statement about systemic reform was needed, something that would distinguish the Rural Challenge vision from that which dominates the existing public discourse and is mostly about schools and classrooms.

8. We describe fully in Appendix B the methodology we followed in our review of student work. In Appendix C we provide a full listing of all Rural Challenge Projects.

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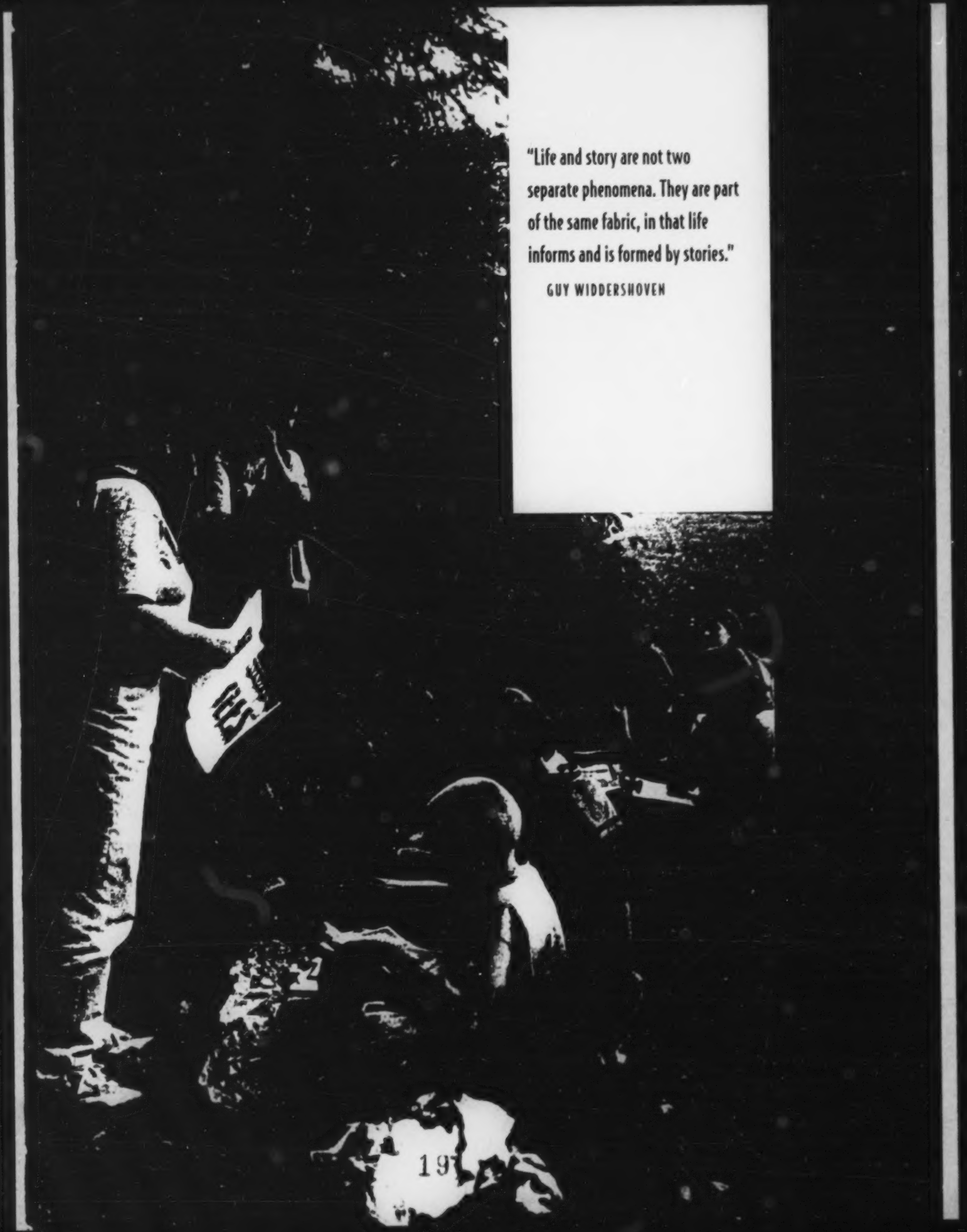
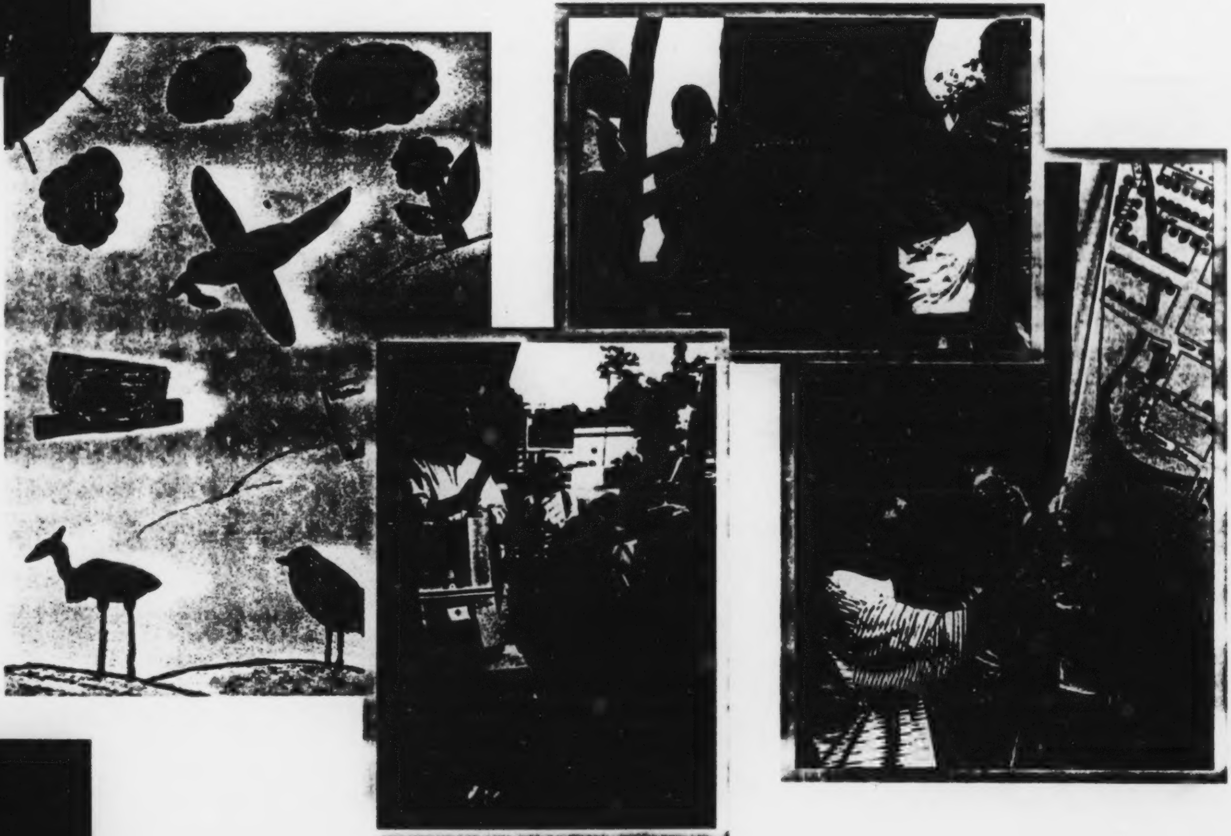


"Life and story are not two separate phenomena. They are part of the same fabric, in that life informs and is formed by stories."

GUY WIDDERSHOVEN

Living and Learning in Rural Schools and Communities: Student Work

IN THIS SECTION OF THE REPORT, we review carefully the work of students and teachers within Rural Challenge sites—work that is typical of schools across the country, around which most time is spent, as well as work related closely to the local setting, the place. In doing so, however, it is important to note that some of the typical work has been influenced by the place-oriented work, especially in its project base, use of primary sources, cooperative groups and involvement with parents and community people who possess particular expertise in what is being studied. We begin with a discussion relating to place—pedagogy and student work.



CONCEPTUALIZING A PEDAGOGY OF PLACE

"A sense of community is most simply put as an awareness of simultaneous 'belonging' of both society and place."
J. LIVINGSTONE

Since so much of the work we describe, along with its connection to the community, has evolved within the Rural Challenge as a Pedagogy/Curriculum of Place, we believe it would be helpful to offer a perspective on the formulation. We do so as a means of bringing greater clarity, possibly keeping the formulation from becoming another piece of educational jargon.[9] We do so as well because the student work around place has been so instrumental in bringing the school and community closer together.[10]

A year ago, many teachers, parents and community people were asking "What is a pedagogy of place? What are we supposed to do?" We can now say that work around place is occurring in virtually *every* Rural Challenge site, and increasingly those in schools and communities can discuss why attention to place is important. This represents a major advance.[11]

Sheri Skelton, a teacher in Shishmaref School in Shishmaref, Alaska, makes the story of place particularly powerful, filled with meaning. Her account exemplifies the importance of place and community in the educational lives of her students.

> **Teaching in Shishmaref, I am a significant part of my students' lives. My contact with students here lasts for at least four years. The seniors I have this year have been under my guidance for six years, and that relationship won't end with their graduation. I know where every student who has graduated in the past five years is, and what has happened to him or her during that time.**
>
> **Flexibility and an open mind are essential for teaching here. Although many of the things I teach are traditional elements of a language arts curriculum, I have found that adapting materials relevant to the Inupiaq culture and the community of Shishmaref has enhanced the learning capabilities of my students. I have modified the curriculum of my writing class, an elective for juniors and seniors, to include as many community resources as possible. For creative writing assignments, I ask students to study the stories prevalent in the community which reflect their cultural history. For research assignments, I encourage students to delve into their history, to interview elders, to record information about Shishmaref's past, to examine how the past affects the present. As a language arts teacher, I am fortunate to be in a community that offers a variety of resources and topics for writing and I am continually amazed at the versatility and durability of the residents here. We have hunters, ivory carvers, skin sewers, dog mushers, persons who grew up in sod houses with no electricity,**

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[9] We have come to worry about "Pedagogy of Place" or "Curriculum of Place" becoming another educational method, buttressed by guidebooks and steps to follow. In our own work we have come to speak about "rooting the work in the local setting," "giving greater attention to place," and "finding ways to make connections to the community, its history, culture, economic circumstances, arts, flora, fauna and landscapes." We do not see it as another method or as an alternative pedagogy.

[10] We should note that even though our focus around student work is place- and community-oriented, we also describe what can be defined as traditional school work, coverage of subject matter, questions at the ends of chapters, worksheets, short writing activities, school as usual. This typical work still dominates the instructional programs in most Rural Challenge sites, but it is being questioned more, seen as less engaging than the work around place, the long-term, more active projects, with the related public presentations. And the work that participants describe as Rural Challenge work is growing everywhere.

[11] We were overwhelmed at the 1998 Rendezvous and at our Regional Research and Evaluation Convocations with the quality of student work around place, the range of entries into the community by teachers and students, and the wider connection to community people and community educational venues that was evident. We didn't hear people (who had been at the work for a year or more) say—"what is a pedagogy of place? how do you do it? what are the steps?" We think they are well beyond this, even as they get more and more ideas by listening to one another.

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> persons who used dogs as their main means of transportation, persons who survived in a hostile and harsh environment. This practice of using Inupiaq culture as an element in the curriculum has helped me to adapt to my community too, and that's just as important because I couldn't be a successful teacher if I hadn't made that adjustment.
>
> ...I am not nor will I ever be an Alaskan Native or an Inupiaq Eskimo, and the cultural heritage shared by my students is not one in which I can truly share, although I certainly do appreciate it. I can, however, incorporate aspects of the Inupiaq culture into my curriculum in order to make education more meaningful and personal for my students. I can continue to develop an awareness and understanding of the cultural and historical roots that nourish my students.
>
> ...I am a teacher who believes that education can influence one's future. I also believe that one's education is significantly improved when the school and community form a partnership. In Shishmaref I see the promise of such a partnership.

A GROUNDED PEDAGOGY

In its most simple form, pedagogy/curriculum of place is an expression of the growing recognition of context and locale and their unique contributions to the educational project.[12] Using what is local and immediate as a source of curriculum tends to deepen knowledge through the larger understandings of the familiar and accessible. It clearly increases student understanding and often gives a stronger impetus to apply problem-solving skills.

There are many obvious advantages to a grounded pedagogy through which students work at developing deep understandings of the human and natural communities that surround them. Moreover, the creation of a deep, more contained focus on what exists locally augments many other popular pedagogical and curricular efforts: constructivist orientations to teaching and learning, experiential education, apprenticeships, environmental education, and service learning, among others. In addition, through this local focus, students are able to make connections to sustainability and ecological interaction as part of their lives, well beyond abstract exercises or case studies. The notion of community sustainability in all its dimensions—economic, cultural and ecological—can be appreciated as part of a system in which the students as well as the school are embedded. This is an important understanding.

Sheri Skelton's account of attending to the particulars of place in her pedagogy reminds us that the work of teachers is central to our focus in this report. A genuine attention to place cannot occur in schools without teachers being willing to think about the teaching-learning exchange differently. Teachers, for example, are the persons who create the opportunities for students to go out to community venues, who find ways of relating community-based work to the larger schooling goals of reading, writing, inquiry, use of knowledge, and understanding of critical academic content. They are also intermediaries, important go-betweens to community people and organizations. What is clear to us, as we have noted earlier, is that more and more teachers in Rural Challenge sites are moving outward, gaining in articulateness about the importance of place, becoming more comfortable in this increasingly complex educational space.

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[12] We draw heavily for this particular introductory account on Ben William's "The Genius of Place" in *Toward Place and Community*, a Rural Challenge Research and Evaluation report, February 1998. In discussing a pedagogy of place, we do not intend to imply that the Rural Challenge is unique in its advocacy for such an educational direction. There is obviously a rich tradition that is being built upon, not just in rural settings but in urban places as well.

Another way to think about this focus on place is to understand that a "grounded" or "rooted" learner stands *within* the world, acting on its many elements, rather than standing outside looking in, acting in large measure as an observer, which is the typical stance expected of students in schools. What is notable from our close observations of student work that has an embedded quality—meaning that the student is *in* the community, researching aspects of its history, learning about local lore, researching and reconstructing aspects of a local watershed, conducting community health surveys, developing exhibits for the local museum—is that the quality of the work deepens greatly, is more carefully attended to, assumes genuine meaning. Students easily distinguish *this* rooted work from typical work in which they stand outside. A grounded, rooted learner understands that his/her actions matter, that they affect the community beyond the school. It is out of this particular formulation that the "student as resource to the community" takes shape—that understanding that students need to be thought of as productive assets to the health of a community. A pedagogy of place, then, recontextualizes education locally. It makes education a preparation for citizenship, both locally and in wider contexts, while also providing the basis for continuing scholarship.

Grounding pedagogy and curriculum in place gives schools and students a familiar point of reference. Location, in this regard, has both psychological and physical dimensions. Once established, a fixed point of reference creates ground and field. These relationships can be described and developed in a variety of ways. The creation of maps, for example, builds understandings of how different elements relate to one another and form a whole system or landscape. The idea of mapping is not limited to geographic relationships. Students can create conceptual maps of ecological, social, economic, institutional and cultural relationships in the local area, ways in which the qualities of community life originate from diverse sources within a place, all of which contribute to economic and social viability. Learning about and seeing the relationships matter greatly. Such understandings are becoming more apparent across the Rural Challenge.

STUDENT WORK AND PLACE

What is clear is that the work around place has grown over the past two years. More of students' time is being given over to locally generated activities and content that has a community-regional base. In most cases, it is seen as providing genuine experience, in the process enlarging students' academic skills and understandings.

A pedagogy that uses the local place as a critical text and laboratory fundamentally changes the perceptions of what is valuable information and what is understood to be real work. Valuable information, for example, may include documenting the assets of the community from its natural resources to its economic and cultural opportunities. Real work may involve an intensive scientific analysis of the community's watershed that results in data which is used by state and federal agencies, or the development of a local historical and cultural museum that is enjoyed by all members of a community.

Discussing student work in the context of a pedagogy of place requires a change from the popular discourse of school success. The most meaningful transformation in the language of success is around the definition of who is a teacher and, related to that, who has control over the learning—content and process. A pedagogy that is centered in the place assumes that many people can be viewed as teachers. Community elders provide, as teachers, an important level of expertise that is rarely found in textbooks, becoming potent sources of historical knowledge and understanding.

> **"We are changing the mindset about who is an expert. The native perspective is being valued. The knowledge of community members is seen as critical."**
>
> **TERI SCHNEIDER, TEACHER, KODIAK, ALASKA**

Students who are wise in the ways of technology, for example, become experts to adults who are not. Community residents who are experts in mountain climbing, painting, quilting, philosophy or the choral arts supplement school programs in ways that make a lean budget stretch to cover many more educational interests. In the process, everyone in a community benefits.[13]

Annenberg Rural Challenge communities, almost universally, are beginning to use the language of place as they observe and evaluate student learning. As the Rural Challenge coordinator in Mendocino, California, Deena Zarlin, noted:

> **We want our community to understand that what we do is not traditional. [We want community members to get] used to the fact that there are students that are not only in classrooms [but] they're outside and they're in town…that the enclosed area of the school isn't what they might be seeing and it's okay. We're changing the perception of what is important in education…we want our students to become civically involved and feel a sense of stewardship for the place they live in. We're trying to do this with our community-based projects. There's probably enough for a lifetime.**

The decision to use the place as textbook and laboratory is not seen as compromising foundational knowledge, that enduring concern about basic skills. Such a base is understood as necessary for addressing real issues in the community. Monie Lundberg, a science teacher in Clear Lake, South Dakota, was emphatic about this. "I feel a responsibility that chemistry of place...has to be good chemistry, provide a good foundation. I want to be confident that the students who work on water quality projects this fall are engaged in deep and productive work. I need to be sure they have an understanding of the big ideas in chemistry."

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[13] When this conception of education takes root, resources can be thought of differently. No longer can educational opportunity be tied exclusively to what is physically inside a school building. When a school's resources are defined exclusively around what is present inside its walls, many rural schools will be found wanting.

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The extension of knowledge, making rich connections, is a principal basis for genuine understanding. This is more than what most students have access to in their schooling. The local place is a venue for those rich understandings. It can provide students with a laboratory from which to extend their understandings of basic principles and comprehend more fully the many interlocking relationships that are embedded in various local conditions. An art project intended to celebrate the departure of migrants for their work far from home can be, as it was in Edcouch, Texas, for example, the inspiration for learning about the economics of agriculture, the history of labor unions, the flow of international commerce, or the politics of race and migration in the southwestern United States. A study of a local cemetery, such as students conducted in Frederick, South Dakota, can provide a basis for understanding historical periods, gaining an entry into family histories, beginning to see the meaning of memorials, establishing a basis for artistic work, possibly considering matters of disease.

Finally, a pedagogy of place appears to transform the language of learning. Many students in Rural Challenge settings study history by becoming historians of their local towns and the major events which are rarely chronicled in history books. They study science by joining their contextual knowledge with scientific understandings, becoming, in the process, scientists who analyze their watersheds, or raise fish for commercial use, or map and document the trees, birds or mammals in their regions. They learn grammar and syntax by producing local newspapers read by virtually everyone in a local community, and they learn accountability by being asked to share their work at school board meetings, legislative hearings, community meetings and state conventions. No assessment is more powerful than having to defend one's research and analysis, written work or mathematical understandings, before a critical audience, not necessarily including one's parents![14]

This section of the report documents student learning over the past two years of the Rural Challenge. The evidence we have gathered is as substantive as it is voluminous and it can be judged, we believe, according to the standards of success discussed above. We should note in relation to the foregoing that students in these Rural Challenge schools tend to demonstrate, for the most part, above average performance on traditional benchmarks of test scores, attendance and graduation rates. This was the case before the Rural Challenge and will likely be the case long after the Rural Challenge.[15] At the same time, the students who have experienced learning that is focused on place have come to value their histories and communities in much deeper ways. They clearly believe that the quality of their work enlarges greatly. Many students told us, "This is work I care about." Moreover, these students are seen by members of the community as valuable resources, genuine citizens, which also changes the way they think about themselves.

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[14] We like very much the growing understanding in Rural Challenge sites that students are becoming historians, scientists, mathematicians, technologists, writers, artists. This seems much healthier educationally than seeing school as a place to learn *about* history, *about* science, and the like. We provide many of the stories related to this formulation later in the text.

[15] We do not imply here that there aren't some difficulties in some settings. Many communities, especially in Appalachia, the southeast and southwest, struggling with a long history of public neglect related to racism and poverty, are struggling to raise test scores, graduation rates, and college going rates. They appear to be making some progress. But even in these settings, the test scores are not viewed as the markers of what students can actually do. It should be noted again that Rural Challenge sites do not see test scores on the various standardized tests as particularly informing, even as they are under increasing pressure to give more attention to them.

Schools and communities are increasingly participating together in facilitating a pedagogy of place and, in turn, finding ways to assess the mutual benefits that occur. In instances in which the community has become integrated into the life of the schools, the quality of student learning is, we have found, consistently higher. It is also more complex, more vital.

EXAMINING STUDENT WORK

In many respects, we examined student work over the course of the year in relation to the personal and collective investment it gained from students and the ways it contributed to moving schools and communities toward a deeper sense of integration, greater mutuality. We asked in a number of ways, does this student work lead to a richer understanding among students of who they are, where they live and what they value, and does it contribute to the life of the community as it enlarges student understandings of academic and socio-cultural content? We intentionally, then, sought descriptions of student work that expressed the various meanings the work held for students, alongside its meaningfulness as genuine academic content, and the ways the work caused students to think of themselves, not simply as students but also as contributing members of their communities.

We understand that the kind of work that would stand out within such a framework would likely have a project base, occur over a longer-than-usual period of time, have room for considerable student choice, have exploratory qualities, an understanding that the outcomes are not fully predictable, relate to things that are cared about beyond schools, and possibly draw upon people beyond the school. We also expected such work to lead to larger-than-usual understandings. Regarding the latter, we believed that such understandings would be exemplified through the complexity of the products, the ability of students to speak confidently and authoritatively about the work, and their interests in continuing their explorations, because new questions had been raised.[16]

A middle school teacher in Tillamook, Oregon, Kelli Ramsey, described the work planned for the 1998–99 year. It demonstrates the qualities we are seeing increasingly in what participants consider Rural Challenge work.

> **We will be doing a large heritage project next year at our middle school. We've divided it into homesteads, dairy, sports and recreation, natural resources, churches and transportation. We're going to spend a whole year, dividing the areas between the six core teachers and each one is going to take a separate area for their students to work on all year. They will do interviews, mapping, research, write papers, make films. Everything will be brought together in a book of our information—student writing. It won't be a teacher-generated thing at all. We'll also put together a web page and one of our teachers is going to put together a weekly television program to be played on our public access station. The kids will do the writing, filming,**

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[16] We speak often in this report about *understanding*, what we conceptualize to be a more expansive formulation about the purpose of work in schools. To understand something is to internalize the knowledge, to be able to use it in new situations, explain it to others, draw it, make analogies around it, and the like. Student work that matches the qualities described thus far is more apt to lead to understanding. For a fuller discussion of the conception, see Martha Wiske, *Teaching for Understanding*, Jossey-Bass, 1997.

> **producing and photography. They'll decide on the issues to discuss and they will be the commentators. We believe this work will increase pride in the place they're living…but it's also going to create more community connections as kids go out in their work. People in the community will see that the kids aren't just stuck in the building doing worksheets.**

The scope of this Tillamook endeavor is large, full of potential. It is representative of an increasing array of projects being developed in Rural Challenge sites and which we will discuss in greater detail. What is encouraging in some of these projects is that they go beyond single classrooms and teachers. In this regard, they are moving in the direction of more systemic change.

While the foregoing description of our interests might seem large, it should be noted that we didn't invent the interests or the related questions. They grew out of our observations of the previous year and the large hopes that were expressed repeatedly by teachers and students in large numbers of Rural Challenge sites. We heard then, as we have since, powerful descriptions of educational possibility—schools going far beyond the conventions. It is a recognition that a pedagogy of place is being filled in philosophically and practically through the actual experience of teachers and students. As an educational formulation that is beginning to define the Rural Challenge, it is clearly becoming richer, even as it struggles to assume a dominant role in schools and communities.

As we noted in the introduction to the report (and in our methodology statement, Appendix B), we examined in our site visits the work students were engaged in—what we understood to be typical work, that which dominated the teacher-student exchange, work that assumed more intense qualities and was related to the world beyond schools, work that occurred mostly outside of school buildings, in community settings, and work done with community people, in and out of schools.[17] We also asked participants from all Rural Challenge sites to bring student work to our Regional Convocations. At these settings, work was displayed, described and discussed evaluatively by students, teachers, parents and community members around its meaning, power, complexity and quality in relation to the skills and understandings being exemplified.

> **"Our school prepares us for real life."**
>
> **EVAN DAVIS, STUDENT, MINNESOTA NEW COUNTRY SCHOOL, HENDERSON, MINNESOTA**

The student work brought to the Research and Evaluation Convocations was extensive in its range and diversity. Most represented larger-than-typical time commitments, often from six to sixteen weeks. Many were completed by groups of students, though there were segments completed by individual students. There were research reports, with a variety of representations of data (graphs, charts, tables, photographs), historical displays, digitalized presentations with multiple media, videotapes, compact disks, reflective learning journals, community economic, recreational, and health surveys, finished craft work or photos of finished craft work (quilts, bookbinding), photos of reconstructed/redeveloped community facilities (museums, historic buildings), nature trails and garden projects, reflective accounts of community service projects, anthologies of poetry, short stories, oral historical accounts, exhibitions of artwork depicting local landscapes, and portfolios of many children's work

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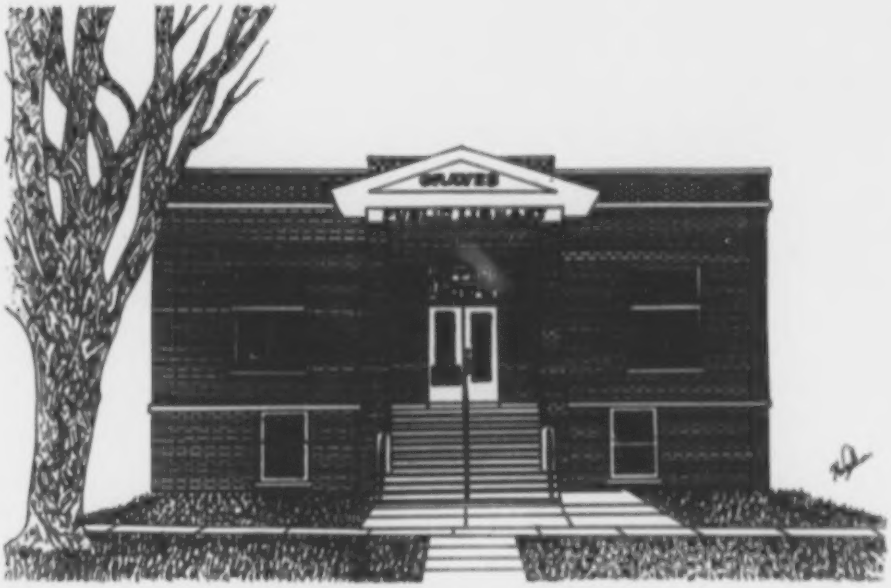
[17] Regular, almost monthly visits were made to schools and communities associated with Rural Challenge projects in Alabama, Alaska, Texas, Pennsylvania, New York, South Dakota, Nebraska, Vermont, Virginia, Kentucky and Oregon.



Graves Public Library, 206 West 3rd
Illustration by: Kevin Johnson
Built by Philo Graves in 1915 as a memorial to his son, Jay Philo Graves, who died at age 7
Architecture: Neo-Classical Revival Architecture

over the school year. These displays were educationally powerful, exemplars of possibility. Importantly, they yielded particularly rich conversations about the quality and direction of students' education in rural schools and communities.

The activities shared by participants demonstrated powerful representations of skills—what are described in the Rural Challenge sites as "emerging standards," those that grow from within rather than those enunciated by states and national organizations. These emerging standards are invariably growing standards, becoming higher standards. Once a class completes a major historical exhibit in a local museum, for example, such exhibits become more common and each generation of exhibits gets better. A new standard for student work has, in essence, been set. A year ago, we could have cited 20 to 30 examples of student work that extended beyond the conventions of typical work, that suggested new and larger possibilities. Now the examples are considerably larger, more commonplace, and they involve ever larger numbers of students and community people. A small sampling of examples, which will be elaborated further in the report, includes:

- Fourth grade students in Henderson, Nebraska are giving Power-Point presentations to state convention audiences on the research they did in their town as well as performing a play they produced which is rooted in their historical work.
- High school students in Mariposa, California are working with various agencies at Yosemite National Park to conduct ongoing environmental studies important to the Park Service. Some of this work has been published.

- Middle and high school students in Marks, Mississippi have founded a Youth Credit Union which makes small loans available to fellow students who are budding entrepreneurs.
- A group of high school students in Weyerhaeuser, Wisconsin manage a business that solar air-dries lumber and is listed in the Wisconsin blue book of federally approved corporations.
- Students in Edcouch-Elsa, Texas produce a journal which focuses on historical, cultural and economic issues relating to the local area. Many of the articles appear in both English and Spanish.
- High school students in Lotts Creek, Kentucky are documenting the history of the school and the community through videotaped interviews with elders and a presentation of still photos dating back to the early part of this century.

OVERVIEW OF LEARNINGS FROM STUDENT WORK

While our intention is to describe some of the representative work that we reviewed, as well as bring forward the stories surrounding the work and the ways in which it made an impact on students, teachers and the community, it might be helpful to first share the understandings that emerged for us about the work.[18] We start with the assumption that work around place is a process of connection *between* learning and place and of students and schools with their environments. When such a connection exists, the development and emergence of learning is both grounded in and given considerable direction by the lived experience of a *particular* community.[19]

Most Rural Challenge teachers we have spoken with over the past two years believe strongly that a pedagogy of place offers a more interesting and engaging way to do their work. It represents for them a constructive shift in the definition of what constitutes meaningful learning, quality work, and intellectual engagement. In some respects, it is also a recognition that "education as usual" is not working well enough, is not engaging students at high enough levels.

While there are different degrees of connection and mutuality across Rural Challenge sites, movement toward a pedagogy of place is providing for many teachers and students a constructive means of conducting education—how it is done, who does it, and how it is evaluated. Further, this approach to education provides a framework of learning that makes explicit not only the connection between learning and place, but also how the product of the learning can be a valuable resource in creating a more sustainable future for rural communities. The interaction, the implied reciprocity, matters, giving the formulation considerable power. In a school-as-usual mode, the emphasis is mainly, if not solely, on the student learner. Pedagogy of place casts a wider net into the learning process—its emphasis is not just centered on the intellectual engagement of the student learner, but also on the enrichment, expansion and extension of the life of the community. If the students are recognized as integral to the community through ongoing engagement and reciprocity, then as an individual student learns and is drawn into higher levels of intellectual engagement, so, too, is the community.[20]

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[18] We need to make clear that we are learning a great deal about what it means to focus curriculum around place in analytic as well as practice terms.

[19] We use the term *connection* to mean alignment in its older more philosophical sense—that understanding of confluence, of deep mutuality. Understanding that *alignment* has become such a technical term, used mostly in association with curriculum frameworks, state standards and tests, we have chosen not to use it, even though we believe it is a better term for what we are trying to convey.

[20] This, too, is an important Deweyan formulation which grew out of his concern about the growing individualism and non-community oriented dispositions he believed were being promoted in schools and in the society.

> **"The pull of the school building is like the power of a huge magnet....The only way to get out of the school building was not to have one. To have worked from a school building would have been to make the work we have been doing merely an innovation."**
>
> JAMES LEWICKI, PROJECT DIRECTOR, KICKAPOO RIVER INSTITUTE (WISCONSIN)

We offer one final note on what we learned about pedagogy of place in our work this past year. Arguing against a homogenized view of rural people and places has been a constant theme in Rural Challenge gatherings. It was not surprising, therefore, to learn that there are, indeed, many different expressions of pedagogy of place at work across Rural Challenge sites, primarily because the connection of students, schools and communities is necessarily with the setting itself—the actual environment where the learning is happening. We are being lead, therefore, to some different language, not only to describe the results of this connection, but for conceptualizing, as well, both the work and how it might be understood. The findings we present in this report are, in fact, examples of how student work that is the product of place-based learning can be thought about, presented, and evaluated. We need first, however, to address the matter of typical work.

TYPICAL WORK

> *"The typical day is typical. We are still pretty isolated. We're starting to have some spots in the day when our kids are really involved in genuine hands-on work, like the web pages. And they're having more chances to converse with community people. Things are beginning to happen, but the impact is not yet huge in our school."*
>
> Jean Haar, principal, Clear Lake, South Dakota

For the most part, students in Rural Challenge sites are engaged in work that would be familiar to most observers of American schools. It matches the constancy of basic subject matters and courses and is buttressed by a host of textbooks, workbooks, a variety of short writing assignments and contained homework, and directed heavily by teachers, leaving students more passive than active, more consumers than collaborators in their learning processes. For example, many of the high school students we spoke with describe their six to eight classes a day as time spent mostly sitting at their desks with a textbook and completing assignments. One student, from Tillamook, Oregon, described her boredom and how she finally convinced her social studies teacher that she wanted to study bats—something she could also use in science—and share her work with elementary students: "It was one of the best things I did last year and the elementary students really enjoyed it, too." In her appeal to do work that would relieve her of the boredom she was experiencing at school, this student helped her teachers view her and others like her as more capable, able to do independent work and collaborate with others in the learning process.

Students offered us many different descriptions of their days at school. The following account, from a 10th grader, is representative of the way "typical work" was described to us. It addresses the conventionality of schools.

> I usually get there early…and go down to the computer lab. I'm not supposed to be there but the teacher's nice, he lets us work there. Then I go to English class….The teacher has us write things we learned the day before…an English term or something like that….Then she'll give us a lesson and we'll do it. On different days we do literature and other days writing and grammar…then I go to Social Studies. That's where we do Rural Challenge work two days a week. That is pretty interesting…the rest is normal history….Then I have science and that's pretty much right out of the book. The teacher there also talks with us a lot about things we care about. Then I have keyboarding…and that's just keyboarding. And I go after keyboarding to Agricultural Education which is full of projects—but a lot is right out of the book. And then I have drama. We had a big play in the spring. The spring is very similar. There usually is a lot of homework, mostly from the textbook.

The constancy of "typical work" is, obviously, difficult to interrupt. Yet, alongside the constancy, signs of interruption are making their way into the typical school script.[21] Virtually all Rural Challenge schools have begun to infuse some of this typical work with community-oriented activities and projects. More of the science work is related to local environments, more work in social studies connects to local history, local writers are finding their way into literature courses. As much as 10 percent of what students in most Rural Challenge sites are engaged in can be described as relating to a pedagogy of place. In some sites, 20 percent is rooted in what is local, and in a few settings things that matter in local communities now take up most of the school day. School at the Center (Nebraska) sees 20 percent as a reasonable goal to work towards. The Colorado Charters devote one-and-one-half to two days a week to community-based work. And at the Kickapoo River Institute, close to 80 percent of the school year is spent around community-oriented projects, mostly in community venues. Increasingly, in all sites, community members are present more often as resources to various classroom projects, as mentors to particular students, and as collaborators in identifying and communicating school needs. It is, as we have noted, the community-oriented work that we focus on in the discussion that follows, but we want to make clear that the typical work—school as usual—remains dominant.[22]

> **"All the schools have vans and all have a goal to spend at least 25 percent of their time outside the classroom learning about the 'real world.'"**
>
> GINNY JARAMILLO, PROJECT DIRECTOR, COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS

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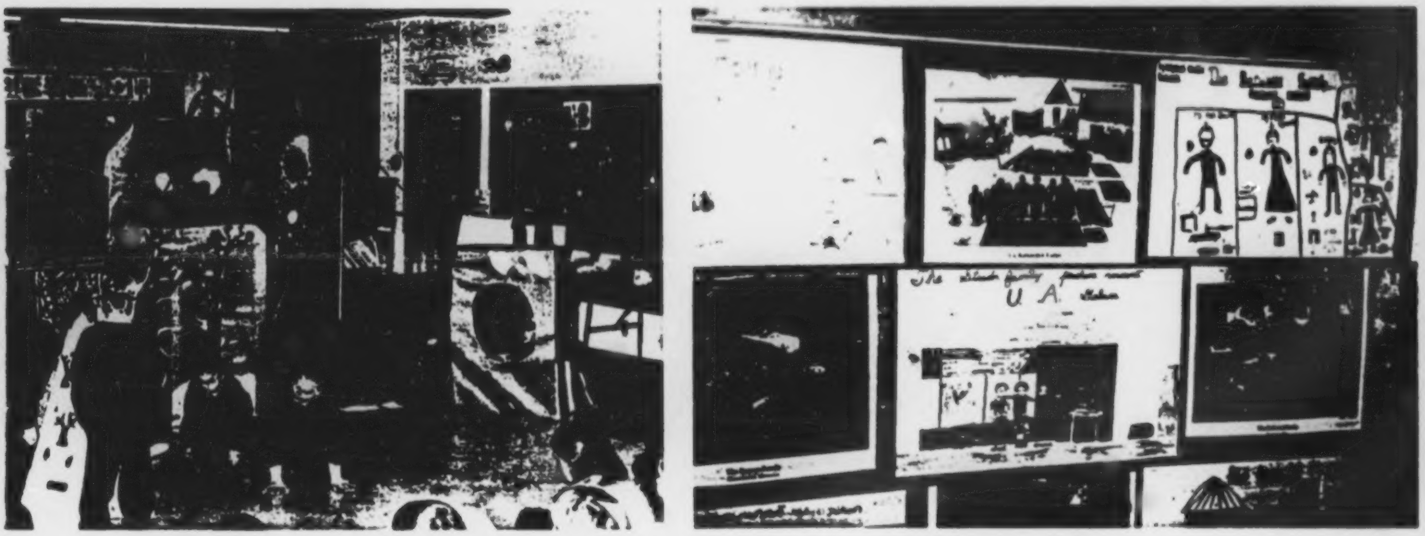
[21] Students in many settings—especially those who have participated in Regional and National Rural Challenge meetings—are beginning to be catalysts for more active, community-oriented curriculum. They are beginning to ask teachers about joining them in curriculum development.

[22] We make use of several examples from the Kickapoo River Institute, which we have viewed as an extraordinary school. We need to note, however, that the local school district voted before the 1998–99 school year to end the school's charter (something a local district can do within Wisconsin's Charter School legislation). This ended, for *this year* at least, what was the beginning of a remarkable educational experiment—in many respects a model of what the Rural Challenge has been encouraging—in this rural area of Wisconsin.



Children's work is visible in the classrooms at The Peacham School, Vermont.

RANGE OF STUDENT WORK

A consistent observation for us is that there is a range of student work around place that is as varied and diverse as both the sites and students themselves. If we understand range to mean how student work is connected within a specific community, then the work we are documenting is best discussed in relation to the needs of individual schools and communities as well as the particular interests of students. For example, work is diverse in relation to the length of time it involves and the number of people participating. It may be a single activity or task, a six-week unit, or a long-term community project; it may involve an individual, a single class, or an entire school and/or community. *Time and numbers of people involved* may, then, be one way to denote this dimension of the work.[25]

The *form* the work takes is also diverse. It may vary in degrees of complexity, depth of engagement and investment; it may involve presentations both within the school and outside the school; and the work may be service-oriented, filled with reciprocity, enlarging the commonwealth, or assume a more personally entrepreneurial quality.

In addition, student work is often diverse in *nature;* it may be finite, the end clear, or it may be more reflective, leading to ongoing analysis or critical thought. This reflective aspect of the work is expressed most clearly in the ways students perceive and talk about the work they are doing. Student work that is "real work" is personally meaningful; it serves the learner and in many cases the larger community; it draws students in and motivates them to do quality work. More importantly, work that is reflective in nature has the potential to broaden students' ideas about learning, helping them think beyond the classroom and/or deepen their knowledge and appreciation of what it means to live in a rural environment.

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[25] In our report last year, we commented on the short-term nature of most projects—initial entries into the local setting. While short-term projects still dominate, there has been considerable movement in the direction of longer-term work, more complexity, greater depth. This is the story we will tell.

Finally, and perhaps most interesting to us about the work we saw is that it seems to push teachers, students and parents into thinking about assessment differently. It appears to be leading to more self-assessment, more public exhibition, and greater permanency. It has brought considerable discussion about the importance of standards that grow directly from the work and not external standards that circumscribe or limit the work.[24]

DISCUSSION OF STUDENT WORK AROUND PLACE

In the discussion that follows, we offer examples of the range and diversity of the work we have seen in Rural Challenge sites. This range and diversity can be defined around the following characteristics:

1. connection to place
2. complexity
3. students' development of expertise, and
4. importance to the community.

While we present the foregoing characteristics as separate, we acknowledge that in practice they overlap. We separate them primarily to suggest particular emphases in the stories we share. They also should be seen as elements around which we began to assess the quality of student work.

Before presenting student work around place directly, it might be useful to offer small snapshots of the diversity as well as commonalties present among Rural Challenge environs and their schools. Embedded in these descriptions are participants' attitudes towards their communities and schools, their places in the world.

Howard
GOLD
Community

THE MEANINGS OF RURAL

When students from Rural Challenge sites at the 1998 Rendezvous talked about the meaning of rural, they spoke of how they saw themselves in the eyes of urban and suburban folks. This is, of course, also how so much of the media frame what is non-urban, non-metropolitan.

> *In the southwestern corner of Minnesota and south central Minnesota we are forgotten.*
>
> *When you are going outside of Grass Valley and there is a little restaurant called the Willow, there is a sign there. And even though there are five or six towns in between, that sign just says 'Tahoe—so many miles' and then 'Reno—so many miles.' Like nobody lives in between there. Like come on, it is not just a bunch of trees.*

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[24] We will follow this discussion closely over the next year. Based on our experience, when teachers and schools gain more confidence about standards growing directly from the work of their students, they tend to focus more on local circumstances as well as gain confidence about their capabilities as curriculum definers.

> *You ask people in Denver where the state line ends and they say Aurora. They have no idea that it is another three hours to the state line, that there is life east of Denver. They know west, they know the west slope, but life ends at Aurora. It is just like a void once you get past [it].*
>
> *It's hard to explain our town because there are no banks or stores. I can talk about the churches and cemetery but that doesn't make a town for most people.*
>
> *O.K. I'll put it to you straight. If you go down the highway at 35 miles per hour and you blink from one stop sign to the other, you have missed my whole town. It is too small.*

Listening to such accounts, a Hiwassee Dam, North Carolina participant noted, "I think [seeing the value in preserving the community] is something we got away from in rural areas because there was a period of time, especially in the rural mountain areas, we even perceived ourselves as the hicks, the hillbillies, and we lost some of the pride we once had in the character of who we are."

"Rural people 'produce' things. They represent their work at County Fairs and in local crafts workshops. They grow things—potatoes, wheat, alfalfa, okra. They fix machines and add to their houses. They are often known for their ability to tell good stories, dance, play the fiddle."

CHRIS DAVIS, STAFF MEMBER, PACERS, ALABAMA

The challenge facing rural communities to enrich their quality of life, to encourage young people to stay or return, to provide a place to grow old well has drawn rural community members and educators across the country together around the belief that community preservation is something of value. There is a growing understanding that preservation is inextricably linked to what happens in the schools; that schools have increasingly become separated institutions for young people engaged in pursuing an official, nationally proposed and sanctioned knowledge base which undervalues the contributions of local community elders; that improving schooling and community life can be accomplished by reuniting them through authentic, meaningful collective local endeavors; and that this work is essential to reclaiming the elusive ideals of democracy, initiative, self-reliance, and public, communal engagement.

"We are seeing the end of a culture and it's extremely scary."

TERI SCHNEIDER, KODIAK, ALASKA

The contexts of Rural Challenge settings are diverse, yet they share such common concerns as dwindling resources, population losses, economic instability, local school closures, environmental assaults and increasing gulfs between community elders and youth.[25] In many settings there is a sense of urgency about preservation before the local culture dies out. Yet the conversation we heard at regional meetings was not one of despair. In coming together, Rural Challenge participants from

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[25] We understand that this is a generalization that doesn't necessarily define each and every Rural Challenge community.

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across the country appear to realize that they share many strengths such as communal ties through a common history, culture, and daily interdependence, a personalization, the knowledge of being known, that counters the isolation in contemporary urban and suburban lifestyles. They also note with considerable pride their traditionally well-performing students and schools. Most favorably compare their young people with urban and suburban students who supposedly live a more "advantaged" life. The following comments are typical expressions:

> *Our students score higher on the state tests than urban and suburban students.*
>
> *Rural students from small schools won more awards at the recent state art competition than students from the big schools.*
>
> *Our graduates had the highest average freshman grade point average at the state university.*
>
> *One of our graduates is the CEO of X.*
>
> *We have a higher percentage of our students going on to four-year colleges and universities than any other school in the state.*
>
> *Our students learn the value of hard work and responsibility.*

Nonetheless, there is a common concern that young people do not appreciate their places much and talk of wanting to "get away from here." Even as we suggested that this might be a stage in the development of adolescents generally, Rural Challenge participants thought their circumstances were actually different.

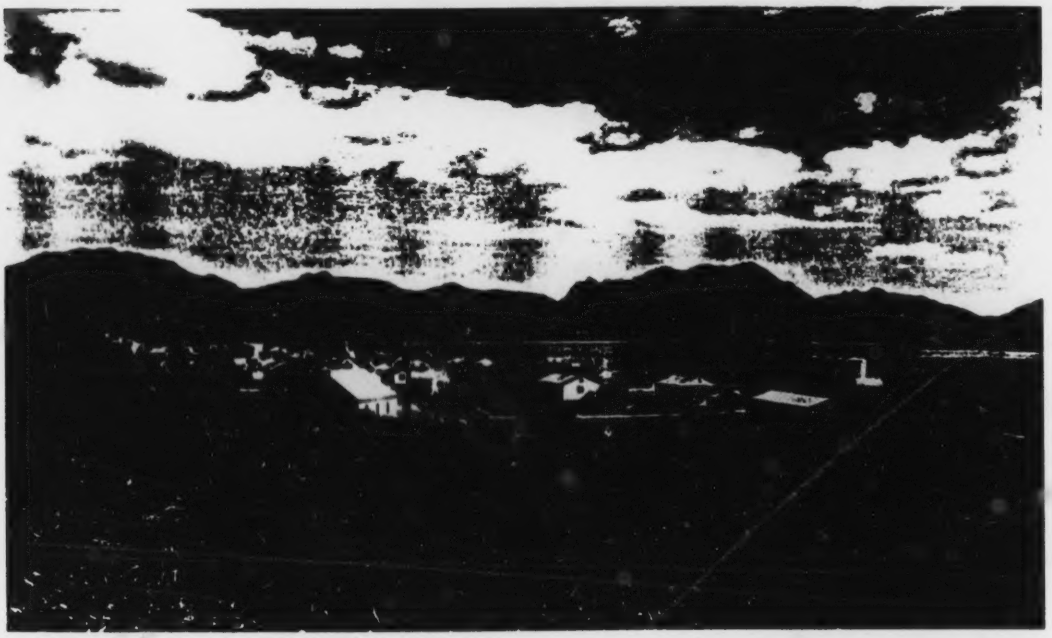
"Everywhere is the center of the world."

PAUL GRUCHOW

Participants at the Rendezvous and our Regional Convocations defined *rural* positively with comments like: "Rural is small town with…common ground in terms of values and beliefs that are reflected in everything that is done." "Rural is like small town, big qualities." Descriptions of their towns to others often included mention of topographical features—they name the rivers, describe the land, locate themselves near "Anasazi ruins," "the Sangre de Cristo mountains," "in the Flint Hills"—and point out the agricultural products common to their area. They also shared their identities as communities based on unique physical features of place, common history, culture and traditions.

"We're the catfish capital of the world."
"We have the best water in the state."
"This is the friendliest place in the state."
"We have the windiest river in the country."
"We have the loveliest sunsets in the world."

Some of the home places of Rural Challenge participants were described at regional meetings:



When I look outside my home I see mountains covered with alder and cottonwood trees and no evergreen trees. Our village is located on a strait and there is a large island across from us. There are often whales which swim up the river near our village. People hunt Kodiak grizzlies in our area. The economy is partly tourism and ocean fishing for salmon. There are 300 people in the village; 102 homes. We have to take our children to Kodiak City to learn how to swim. Our water is too cold.

OLGA PESTRIKOFF, TEACHER, KODIAK, ALASKA

Our town is very, very small. There is no stoplight, we have 2 gas stations and 5 pizza takeouts. The downtown is 5 blocks long. The charter school I attend, Minnesota New Country School (7–12), is located in a renovated restaurant. We are located on the Minnesota river. Our economy is agriculture; we grow soybeans, corn and chickens.

BETSY KROON, STUDENT, HENDERSON, MINNESOTA[26]

Weldon is located in Halifax County near Roanoke Rapids and Halifax. The economy is farming—corn, peanuts, soybeans. The people work as farmers and house cleaners.

LYDIA HARDING-ELDER, PRINCIPAL, WELDON, NORTH CAROLINA

Packers Bend is in Monroe County, in southwest Alabama. There are 7 churches and 1 store.

JOSEPHINE CLARK, COMMUNITY MEMBER, PACKERS BEND, ALABAMA

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[26] The Minnesota New Country School moved in the fall of 1998 to a new site in Henderson, Minnesota. Betsy Kroon notes of the new setting: "The town only has a few store fronts: among them are one gas station/grocery store, one bar/grill, a drug store, an antique shop, a newspaper, a post office, and two banks. The building the school calls home is no longer a renovated restaurant. In fact, it is a lovely new facility that took over a year and a half to build."

Idalia is in eastern Colorado. The town has 92 people and a K–12 school with 125 students. The economy is ranching and farming—wheat and corn. The school has a new gymnasium which is linked to a greenhouse and an assisted living center.

Kristi Minor, parent, Stewards of the High Plains, Colorado

We're out in the middle of the prairie in southwestern Nebraska. We have 300 people....We have hardly any trees. It is wide open. We do wheat farming and [there is] a lot of cattle production. In our nearby town of North Platte....They have a place that butchers horses and sends the meat to Europe. Our students are into rodeoing and things like that.

Larry Seeger, school administrator, Wallace, Nebraska

The geography is all mountains and pine trees. There are 350 people in the district, 150 live in town. We have 2 stores. The roads are poorly maintained. People have to drive 45 minutes to work. There are not a lot of rich people living in the area. We are a one hour bus ride from outlying towns into the K–8 school in Camptonville. The school has 68 kids. The economy is mostly logging. I like the privacy best and the fact that everyone knows everyone.

Devan Hilligoss, student, Camptonville, California

RURAL SCHOOLS

Participants described for each other at our various Research and Evaluation Convocations the variety of schools they represented. The following descriptions share a focus on size, flexibility, personalization, and the sharing of limited community resources.

On this island, where every child is or will one day be my student, I am 'The Teacher.' As the only high school English teacher here, I cannot escape that identity. If my wife and I go to dinner at one of the three restaurants, I will see parents and have a conversation. If I'm hiking in the mountains, I will meet a parent at the trail head who wants to ask about her child. If I'm at the hardware store buying parts to fix my shower, a kid will ask me about his assignment. If I'm at the airport to board a plane, I will know most of the people there, each wanting to know where I'm off to and why....There are advantages and disadvantages to living in a community far removed from what we like to refer to as "the real world." The advantages, for me, outweigh the disadvantages. I have complete autonomy in terms of daily lessons; I write my own curriculum and set my own pace. I teach to the entire range of students, from mainstreamed students to Merit Scholars. This lends a richness to the day, a day that never sees me repeat the same class. I am able, over a four-year period, to build relationships with students that would be unheard of in a larger school.

ROB BUCK, TEACHER, WRANGELL HIGH SCHOOL, WRANGELL, ALASKA
AS DESCRIBED TO CHRIS BENSON, BREAD LOAF RURAL TEACHER NETWORK MAGAZINE

Ocracoke School is a small school on the outer banks island in North Carolina. There are 32 students, 9–12; they have 76 students, pre-K–12....Typically the kids walk to school and probably get there between 7 and 7:30. Teachers will be there but kids have free run of the school. They can do what they want to do....Their day begins with breakfast in the cafeteria and then they go to their classes. Everything from kindergarten right through. They have eight teachers. The classes are block but it's small enough so if the social studies teacher has a good project and wants the whole morning, it can be arranged just by talking with three other teachers....Teachers need to be certified in several areas....They can teleconference in real time and expand the offerings for kids because they can tap into the community college courses [as well as others]. If at 10 a.m. they want to take physics and it is being offered from Gates County, all they have to do is log on and pick up the Gates County teacher. They don't have set periods that they have to sit for 45 minutes. The school is so small that everything can be individualized.

JEANNE MEIGGS, CO-DIRECTOR, ALBEMARLE RURAL CHALLENGE PROJECT, ALBEMARLE, NORTH CAROLINA

"We have three schools, one small elementary, one small high school, and one charter school. The first two schools follow the Carnegie units where you have to accumulate a certain number of units in order to graduate. The charter school wants to integrate different disciplines around themes....The curriculum will be experiential—doing things that are not distinctive from normal living, whatever you do in a community. The school will have 16 students."

LAND INSTITUTE, SALINA, KANSAS

"The charter schools are all multi-age. One is 6, 7, 8 in one room. Another is kids age 5 to 14 in one classroom. Battle Rock has grades 1–6 in one room. Marble has two classrooms K–3. Lake George has two 'grades' together, but we don't call them grades anymore."

COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS

The entire school population of Marble Charter School, Marble, Colorado.

“I love the area I live in and
I want to go back there to live.”

BRIAN BLALOCK,
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT,
HILLSBOROUGH, NORTH CAROLINA

Connection to Place

> *"After all, the high school students alone make up 15 percent of the total population of the community. They have to be seen as significant community resources."*
>
> MARK MARSHALL, PROJECT DIRECTOR, ELDORADO, TEXAS

MANY RURAL CHALLENGE SITES are finding their way into the local setting by "looking again," taking in the visual aspects, getting close to the history, the people who were there before, the people who currently make it their home. We heard many students describe how they originally thought of their places "as having nothing" and have come to see much more than the "nothing." They shared with us their surprise about some of the interesting people who currently live or have lived in their communities; about the fact that there are people who write and paint; about people who work out of their homes, making use of various technologies; about people who speak different languages, have special knowledge about historical, cultural and scientific matters.

In Idalia, Colorado (Stewards of the High Plains), elementary and middle school students have produced a display entitled "Picture Old Idalia." It began as a school history project, the collection of photographs. It is now a more permanent exhibit that is bringing community people into the school

A Historic Tour of Idalia

Compiled by
the Fifth Grade
of Idalia School

February 1998

to share their knowledge of the people and places depicted in the photos, which keeps the work going, and will be part of a school-community museum to be developed within the new gymnasium construction. Cody Minor, a student from Idalia, commented as follows:

> If you came to the 5th grade on any day over the last three months, you would see some older white-haired persons with kids hanging over them. They are looking at pictures of old time things and people are explaining what the pictures are about. These sessions are tape recorded, plus some kids are taking notes…the students mount the photos on display boards and take them to public presentations. They show photos of the old families and the history of the town. They are also put up at the school so people can come in during the day to look at them. We now have over 1000 pictures of families from the area and a lot of them are original homesteading families.

As an adjunct to their work, elementary students have been taking people on a walking tour, sharing the historical information they have learned, telling people of "the great robbery" with the thief escaping on his horse and being chased by a bank teller riding his bicycle. Further, the eighth graders are working with a person from the Central City Opera company to help with the production of a melodrama based on the history of Idalia, written and developed by students, and presented around a dinner theatre format. Such efforts certainly connect students to the place, enliven the study of history, involve presentation of an important legacy and lend value to the community.

In many sites, children and young people have been provided cameras to photograph their communities, to "map" their insights into their places. We have been treated over the year to many dazzling displays of photography of place. PACERS (Alabama), in particular, has made photography a central element of its work around place—providing many schools with cameras and darkroom equipment as well as workshops for teachers and students relating to photography as art. Student photography exhibits are regular features of PACERS schools and PACERS celebrations. And student photographs fill the pages of the community newspapers which have become such a hallmark of PACERS schools. We present on the opposite page two photos taken by a fifth grader in Coffeeville, Alabama along with her accounts of what the photos represent. The place comes through!

Oral histories have been central elements of many school efforts to link the school and the community as well as engage students around place. This is particularly vital as so much of the local history is absent from typical school materials and curriculum. Those in culturally isolated settings or from communities that have received only minimal attention in school materials or the media feel especially in need of oral history accounts. Here we think about communities in the delta of Mississippi, in Appalachia, along the Rio Grande River, in the Native American communities, but the power of oral histories extends beyond such settings. While oral histories are most often tied to work in history and the language arts, they are also becoming more common in other curricular areas.

> "In our school we have English teachers doing family trees. We found out that one of our students in La Villa had a grandfather who tried to get into Pancho Villa's army. He was only 12 or so, and Pancho Villa kept sending him home because he was too young. He tried two or three times until they wrote a note and sent it back with him and told his parents if you do not hold your son, we are going to keep him."
>
> RICARDO GAMEZ, TEACHER, LLANO GRANDE PROJECT, EDCOUCH-ELSA, TEXAS

PACERS Program

My name is Melodye Dunagan of Coffeeville, Alabama. I am a 5th grade student at Coffeeville Elementary School. The reason that I took a picture of the Taxidermy Shop in Coffeeville is because I love taking pictures, and I love animals. Mr. Calvin Guy, my grandpa, built this shop a long time ago. He lets me visit it a lot. I would like to be a taxidermist just like my grandpa. He will allow me to take pictures of all the mounted animals in his shop. I really enjoyed taking the picture of the shop and hope to do more things like this.

I also took a picture of Mr. Calvin Guy holding a fish, because I know how much he loves to fish. He mounts a lot of fish from the Tombigbee River. My sister, Mandy, also likes fishing. In the picture, she is trying to find out if the fish has teeth. Mr. Guy, who is our grandfather, likes to tell us about the different parts of all kinds of animals.

Mr. and Mrs. Lennie Clark, Sr., oral history subjects, in the yard of their Lower Peachtree home in Alabama.

A year ago we examined a fairly large sample of oral histories. We were impressed with many, primarily for the power of the stories that were told, their obvious depth. But most caused us to wonder how much preparation students received, whether the end products were understood. The oral histories we reviewed this year seemed fuller, more detailed, more vibrant, filled with voice. Students who completed oral histories could talk about their work more confidently and teachers spoke of having more productive ways of helping students engage in oral history work. Having examples, moving more of the work toward publication, which is now more common, appears to have made a difference. Francisco Guajardo, from the Llano Grande Center for Research and Development, in Edcouch-Elsa, Texas, a site that makes heavy use of oral histories, describes their process as follows:

> The oral interview process has a structure. First, students and teachers follow the process of identifying interview subjects, after which the student [asks] the subject for permission to be interviewed. Then a questionnaire instrument relevant to the [research seminar] and the interview subject is developed: included here should be objectives and goals of the interview. After fine-tuning the questionnaire and securing equipment—a tape recorder, cassette, and photo camera if possible—students then conduct the interview. Then we transcribe the interviews. Finally, our students prepare narratives for publication in the *Journal*; the narratives are strictly based on the transcriptions. The products, in turn, are now being used as literature in many of our classes.

"After an energetic exchange between students on a passage from the selected literature, one student forcefully took charge of the debate when she stated, 'No that's not what my grandmother meant in that paragraph.' The students were not reading Dickinson, Bronte or Shakespeare, they were reading the oral history of Santos Layton whose granddaughter happened to be in that particular English class. It was a memorable classroom experience, one where the literature came to life and where the students discussed a living author who was close to their lives."

FRANCISCO GUAJARDO, PROJECT DIRECTOR, LLANO GRANDE PROJECT, EDCOUCH-ELSA, TEXAS

We present segments of two products of oral histories that match our definitions of thoughtfulness, strong voice and good historical writing. The first comes from Edcouch-Elsa, Texas and the Llano Grande Project. The second comes from a 10th grade student in Howard, South Dakota.

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Oral History of Santos Layton

Santos Layton is a wonderful storyteller. When we visited her house, she told us about her work, her family, and her community. Here's a glimpse of her experience written by Leila Layton.

first came to the Valley in 1939 from Goliad, Texas, where I was born. My mom, my aunts, two cousins, and I came in 1939 when I was about 17. From my immediate family, it was only my mother Albina Alvarez, and me, because my parents were separated when I was four months old, and I was the only child. When we got to the Valley, my daddy was living in McAllen. My mother was from Brownsville, my father from Hebronville.

We got here about 11:00 on a Saturday night in late November of 1939; I think it was the 25th. I remember the day very clearly. I remember only a few dirt roads in the town. The Vahl'sing packing shed was in operation then, and everybody seemed to be working there. The shed looked like a town.

On Monday of the following week, I started working at the shed. My job at first was labeling broccoli bunches so they could be distributed to stores. I got that job through a friend. I did that for a while, but after that I worked packing carrots and putting them into cellophane bags. The third job I had at the Vahl'sing shed was as a floor lady, where I was in charge of 60 ladies. That was a pretty good job and a lot of responsibility.

I think they found out I was capable of handling that many women because they saw that I had a certain way of dealing with people. I guess they saw that I could lead others. That is a gift I got from God. I always loved people. I tried to talk to people, and I always tried to keep my smile. I don't mean to say I never lost my temper, because I'm human. But I think God blessed me with being able to keep a conversation and things like that.

The girls were good to deal with, especially on Saturdays when everyone wanted to go to the dance. I'd tell them, "Girls you want to go to the dance? Hurry up, let's hurry, if you want to go see your boyfriend at the dance." And the girls worked harder. They went to the dance, and I'd go home to my kids. We went to dances often too, but I had kids during most of the time that I was a floor leader at the Vahl'sing.

I worked as a floor lady for about five years, though I did it for only about six months of the year. That was the in-season for vegetables. The other six months we spent in Hereford, Texas. There we worked carrots, potatoes, and sugar beets. We kept this schedule until we decided the kids were missing too much school. I didn't want my kids to be like me, without an education. That's when I told my husband I was going to have to find a permanent job so we wouldn't have to migrate so much. So I worked at the Vahl'sing shed from 1939 to about 1951.

I applied for a job at the Rotel and worked as a floor lady there too. But work at the Rotel cannery was seasonal also, so I kept looking for a permanent job. Finally, about a week before the season was over, I went to Monte Alto to a big place over close to Delta Lake. I think it was a Lutheran religion nursing home. I got the job and was told to be there at 6:30 the next morning. So the next day I got there early and worked the entire day in the kitchen. They also told me the job would be only part-time. "Fine," I said, and kept working hard.

Well, the next day, they called me into the main office. "Oh my God" I thought to myself, "What did I do wrong?" Turns out they liked my work from the day before and offered me a permanent job as a nurse. "We've been observing how you've been working and we've decided we can make a good nurse out of you," said the supervisor of the nursery. "We'll turn you into a good nurse." So they paid for my training, and I became a nurse. I continued working in different nursing homes until 1979 when I injured my back and retired.

When my husband and I married in 1944, I remember this clearly too, we had no transportation, so we got on the train here in Elsa and went to Brownsville to buy a suit for my husband. My husband, who was born in Palo Alto, was raised here in Elsa. He was born in 1913. We had five wonderful children together. When the kids were young we migrated every year. We'd go to Hereford, and put the kids in school there. We'd stay there until December, though some years if the crop was real good, we stayed there through Christmas.

My kids used to play marbles, they played with tops, and they played ball out on the street, when they had time. But in June of 1956, we had an accident in the family that just changed our lives around. Our oldest son Pablito was killed when a car ran over him. Two months after his death we again migrated to Hereford. Shortly after we got there, my husband decided to buy an accordion for the kids. I was mad at him because the accordion cost $49. I told him, "Honey, why would you want to pay that much money for an accordion when you can use that money to buy more important things, like clothes for the kids, or things for school." "Mommy," he said, "I want to buy that accordion for the kids, because even if they don't learn how to play it, they'll be kept busy inside. I don't want to lose another child like we lost Pablito." So I agreed to keep the accordion, and that was the beginnings of music in our family.

Really the accordion was meant for Rene, then our second oldest boy, but Bennie, the youngest boy, just loved to play with it. My husband kept saying, "don't let Bennie play with that accordion," because he thought Bennie saw it as a toy. And it was a toy for him. My mother, who lived with us, used to love to whistle tunes for Bennie, and he played the accordion to my mother's tunes. And since Bennie was my mother's favorite, she really encouraged him to play. A las escondidas my mother and Bennie made music together, my mother whistling, Bennie playing the accordion. Boy, was my husband surprised when he first heard how well Bennie could play.

About a month after my husband bought the accordion, Tony and Rene said, "Mom, we need a guitar." "Oh my God," I said. I knew nothing about guitars, and besides we had to drive all the way to Amarillo, about 100 miles away, to the nearest place where guitars were sold. Luckily, one of our friends from Elsa, who worked with us in Hereford, offered to sell me a guitar for $5. He offered it to me after he thought I had a problem. "What's the matter, Mrs. Layton, you look worried." I told him I had been thinking about that guitar my children wanted. To my surprise, he said he had three of them and offered to sell me one. I quickly bought that guitar, and the kids then had two toys.

That's how they started. The rest is history. As you know the Hermanos Layton became one of the biggest bands around. Tony, Rene, Bennie, and Norfi, who started singing with the band when she was 14, have been playing together for years. They even gave Roberto Pulido his start way back when he was a kid. Now the band has even been featured in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. The bad thing about it is that I had to lose a son.

Oral History of Nadine Buttemeier

WRITTEN BY KATIE BUTTEMEIER

Nadine (Scott) Buttemeier's ancestors originated in Scotland. In the late 1870s they moved to Wales, and from there crossed the ocean to Wisconsin. Nadine's great-great-great-grandfather was the first Scott to settle in Wisconsin, but died shortly after.

In the 1880s Nadine's great grandfather came to South Dakota and settled in Artesian. In 1890 Nadine's father was born, and in 1923 Nadine, the youngest girl and the middle child in a family of five, came into this world.

The Scott's lived in a house south of Fedora where they raised cattle, chickens, pigs, horses, corn, and oats.

In the winter, the snow would be so high she couldn't see the roads, and the only way to school was to walk on top of the banks. Using only one or two rooms downstairs was a way to conserve heat during the winter months. Her family had to heat their house with coal or cow chips, because there were so few trees on the prairie at that time. At night the three girls would all sleep in one bed, the two younger boys would sleep in their parent's room directly above the kitchen stove.

The winters were rough, but so were the early 1930s when the dust storms and grasshoppers hit South Dakota. The dust storms would come in the summer and fall, when the drought stricken fields were most vulnerable. The winds would pick up the top soil and spread it around, making it hit houses and farm buildings.

According to Nadine, the sky was so black that she couldn't see, and you could hear it hit the house and the windows. After the dust storms came the grasshoppers.

The grasshoppers were just as devastating as the dust storms. When they flew over the sky they blocked out the sun, and at night you could hear them eating what crops were left. After they passed, only a few nubs of corn were left.

The grasshoppers and dust storms were a main reason Nadine's father had to work with the WPA work relief project. Her father would take his team of horses and help make side roads and ditches. "You just didn't get a check back then," Nadine said. "You had to work for it." Nadine's clothes were very plain back then. Some clothes came from the relief program and others came from her cousins in Wisconsin. According to Nadine her mother, sisters, and she would tear up the old hand-me-downs and make new dresses and clothes from the rags. Underwear and handkerchiefs were a different situation. Salt sacks and flour sacks were soaked to get the company logo off. Then they would sew the sacks together and make hankies out of the salt sacks and bloomers out of the flour sacks. "We never were without a handkerchief," Nadine said.

• • •

Schooling was a big part of Nadine's early years. She and her siblings would walk two and a half miles every day to a one-room country schoolhouse near Fedora. Nadine's first through third grade years were at Fedora. Then after switching houses the third through eighth grades were spent at Artesian. The remaining four years of her high school career were at the two-story school house in Fedora.

• • •

After high school Nadine worked for a family in Artesian to earn money. Her first purchases were a coat and a pair of glasses. After earning some money, she and a girlfriend went west to Spearfish to attend Black Hills State and attain their teaching degrees. Nadine attended school for one year to teach in a country school. If she would have wanted to teach in town that would have required staying for two more years.

After getting her teaching degree, Nadine taught at the Lewis country school near Fedora. She feels a greater number of books, no more country schools, a more advanced form of math, history, and science are some of the major changes in the school system. "There was very little history because it was being made when I was going to school," Nadine said.

After teaching for four years she was married to Ilo Buttemeier and stayed at home to raise a family. In 1971 Nadine went back to college. She went to Dakota State for three years to update her teaching degree and then mainly substituted at Howard, Artisian, and the colony school.

There was no football when Nadine attended high school but there was baseball and basketball. She can recall having a good time watching her brothers play basketball.

Nadine and her sisters and brothers had a good time any time they came to town. They would just walk up and down the street because it wasn't very often that they got to come to town. They would go to movies or roller-skating at the Fedora Hall on occasions for 10 cents. Although Nadine couldn't tell what was happening in the silent movies, she did know they hopped around a lot. She once went to the Corn Palace to view a movie called "Last Man."

Every once and a while when they were at home they would take the battery out of the car and hook it up to the radio so they could listen to "Amos and Andy," "The Neighbor Lady," who was from Yankton, some political speeches, and boxing when her cousins would come and visit. She and her family also heard Orson Wells famous Halloween prank "The War of the Worlds." Nadine remembers hearing the radio program and hurrying to check to see if their neighbor was alright because her husband was out of town. That's when they found out it was all a joke.

Nadine has seen many changes in the world in the last 50 years. In men, women, and Miner County. Women in the '30s and '40s were encouraged to go to school and further their education, but didn't because it was easier to get a job. Now more women are going to college.

According to Nadine the men are more educated now too. Before a lot of boys didn't go to school because they had to stay at home and help on the farm.

There is also a greater number of women in the work force. The greater number of married female teachers is a major change Nadine has witnessed. When she was going to school and teaching school there were hardly any married teachers. When they got married they were expected to stay home and take care of the family.

According to Nadine men are more active in the family. "The younger generation of men are taking a more active role in their family than they used to," Nadine said.

• • •

Nadine feels that the dramatic downhill slide of Roswell and Fedora is the biggest change in Miner County. "As soon as the trains and school left they just went downhill," Nadine said. "Howard is the main town now." Nadine says although Howard is the main town it doesn't offer enough opportunities for future generations. She sees more kids going to school, and more kids moving away because the jobs they are trained for are not available in Howard.

These local stories add to the history and literature available to students. They strengthen and add context to existing connections. And they provide students, as well, an understandable venue for their reading and writing that adds value to their classmates and communities.

PLACE AND THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

The Selborne Project, carried out in relation to the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, represents another unique form of getting students into place. Middle school students in Russell, Pennsylvania and across the border in Falconer, New York, using the Selborne curriculum framework, which encompasses six to eight weeks, focus their attention on a single square kilometer surrounding their schools (though in both places, there have been extensions). Students learn to survey the environment, identifying, cataloging and describing the natural and human history of the place. They maintain natural history journals similar to those written by Gilbert White and Henry David Thoreau and maintained by today's professional naturalists, filled with their sketches, maps, architectural and nature drawings and descriptions of what they observe. In the process, they learn how complex and interactive an ecological system really is.

> **"I like Selborne better [than regular school] because you don't just use a textbook. You don't just read about it, you DO IT. It doesn't stick in your mind as well from a book."**
>
> **5TH GRADE STUDENT, RUSSELL, PENNSYLVANIA**

Candace Cochrane, our Research Associate for the Selborne Project, drawing on her close observations and interviews, provides a useful description of the way Selborne develops in the schools. We present her summary account to get closer to the way students, teachers and the community intersect and how Selborne proceeds as an instructional process and catalyst for change. (In this regard, it goes beyond place exclusively and gets, as well, to the matter of quality.)

The Selborne Project

At Russell, the Selborne Project is challenging the students, especially in writing and observation, in developing interpersonal skills with the community, in creativity and visual thinking, in organizing and carrying through long-term projects. Time for students to work on their journals and projects in the classroom makes for more in-depth and carefully constructed work.

During Selborne the students are definitely IN their community—exploring its natural environment, talking with community adults, gathering data and writing about architecture, history, ecology, and business. Likewise, community members are sometimes in the schools volunteering to assist students with their work, accompanying students on their field walks and sharing their knowledge of the community.

The 5th and 6th graders at Russell do Selborne together. A major benefit of having the two grades work together is the teaching and/or guiding the 6th graders do for the 5th graders. Also there is a breaking down of social barriers between the "regular" students and the special education students.

For all the students, the thought of searching the Johnny Run, a local stream, for crawfish specimens, drawing monuments in the cemetery, catching butterflies, constructing architectural models of the old buildings in town, having their own journal is exciting. And what teacher wouldn't love to take his/her students out of the classroom more often than the occasional field trip?

During Selborne the students have alternating indoor days and outdoor days. Outdoor days are for collecting data in their square kilometer and indoor days are for research or processing that data in either hands-on activities (reproducing in wood the eggs of your assigned bird for instance) or writing assignments.

A sampling of comments from Russell School parents suggests an awareness of how the Selborne project is benefiting their children:

> *It improved my daughter's community awareness and self-esteem, made the concepts she was learning more real.*
>
> *The final project required Dad and Joey to work together.*
>
> *Learning about his environment was meaningful to my son. He was more eager to learn when he was able to make choices.*
>
> *It made him realize that doing small projects in his community can mean a lot to those who live there.*

When I asked 5th graders how Selborne was different from the rest of the school year, one told me that,

> *You couldn't waste time because there is so much to do.*

Another student said that Selborne was good,

> *Because I'm out with my parents sometimes and I'll say "this was the first house built in Russell." You can teach your parents some new stuff. You are actually teaching them something.*

A third student said,

> *You are looking at the flower bed and you've never seen this bug on the leaf before, but now all of a sudden you see all those bugs and birds everywhere. And you're like, "Where did they come from?" You never noticed it before. After you go through Selborne, you see all these things.*

During Selborne, I see animated, even excited teachers. They really enjoy being out in the field with the students. They say they are often learning about the place they live alongside their students. As one teacher said, "The teaching and learning process is just so much more rewarding than sitting in a classroom because it has so much more significance. We go out and observe and explore things and then we come back and write about them. With something that is meaningful to them, the motivation is taken care of."

The science teacher added, "you can't do better than go outside and experience science."

Adult volunteers accompany students as they explain their square kilometers. There are parent volunteers and volunteers who are grandparents and there are people who are not connected at all to the students. Several adults who started volunteering when their children were doing Selborne enjoyed it so much that they offered to come back the next year and even the year after that. One adult commented: "I just enjoy being with the kids. And I enjoy learning; every year I keep learning things about the village and nature."

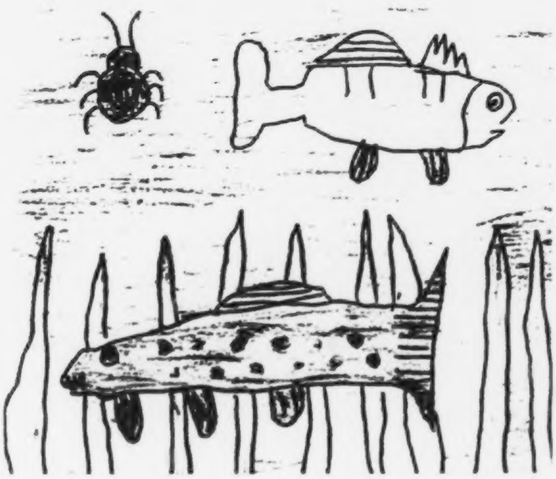
Some parents take time off from work to volunteer during Selborne. It is a way for them to be with their kids in a meaningful situation, to learn what their kids are doing and how they are around their peers and other adults.

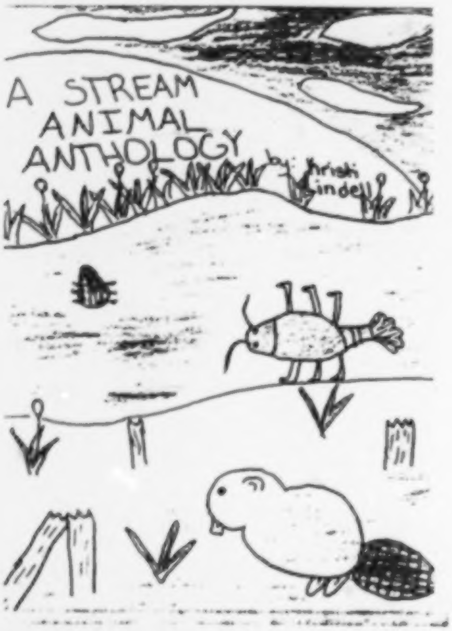
Since Selborne began, more businesses request students to visit than there is time for during the eight weeks of the Project. Consequently, the 6th grade continues business tours throughout the school year.

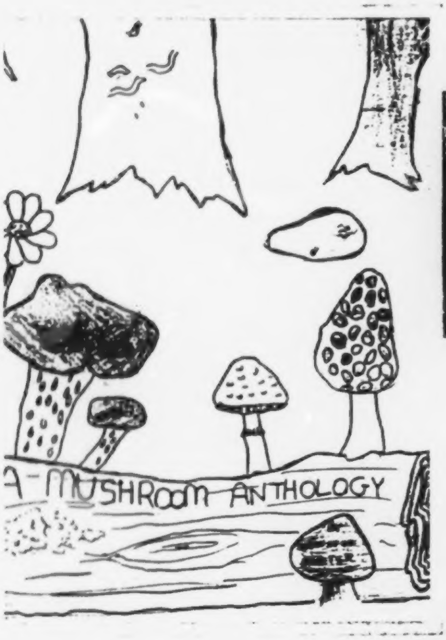
Finally, when I look at the journals, I see the student and not the teacher or the curriculum. I see authentic learning in these journals. The journals demonstrate an understanding about the color and shape of leaves; the parts of insects; how a graph can represent population fluxes; how adjectives can be used to describe butterflies and poems describe clouds; how to find the hidden history in cemeteries and how to find your way home using a map.

As part of their work, children learn through Selborne to sketch their local landscapes, to really see their community. When the project ends, the students have a portfolio portrait of their place and indirectly of themselves. The sketches have gotten better over time. Again, the fact that children see the work of previous classes helps with this. When the Selborne Project ends for the year, teachers and students display for their parents and community members their journals and the final projects they have made. We present on the following page a sample of drawings, some from nature and some from students' imaginations, which show how they see their place.

Student Drawings from Selborne




A STREAM ANIMAL ANTHOLOGY
by Kristi Lindell


A MUSHROOM ANTHOLOGY

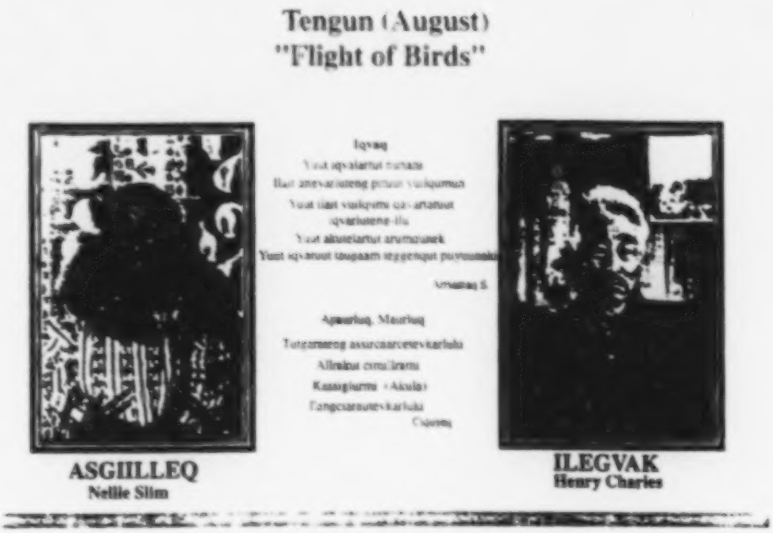
PLACE AND TECHNOLOGY

Place is also developed through technology. It is, for example, a central feature of the website being developed at the Akula School in Kasigluk, Alaska. This is a school that has come far in integrating the local language and culture into the work of the school. The website is a collaboration of students and community people with teachers acting mostly as "coaches."

At Akula, there has been, over several years, considerable integration of the local Yup'ik language and culture into the school. Life in the village and the school overlaps in many different ways. Scott Christian, our Research Associate for Akula, has become well integrated into the school and the cultural work. This has occurred in part because of his experience in various Alaska communities and his cultural dispositions, but it is also the case because the school, teachers, students, and community members are so compelling in their commitments to preservation. We provide below aspects of Scott's report on the Akula website, to which he devoted considerable time.

> From August until February, my time in Akula was mainly devoted to working on the website. We had talks about what should be included, and the plan evolved a great deal. Most of the conversations were with staff, although I did have a few opportunities to talk to students. Levi [a teacher and community member] also presented the plan at a community meeting where it was well received....
>
> First, it was decided that the site would begin in Yup'ik, since this is the primary language of the village, and everyone wanted to make a clear statement about the preeminence of Yup'ik in the school and the village.... We decided to organize the site into three overlapping, linking areas: Yup'ik Studies Program, Academics, and Athletics and Community of Kasigluk....Obviously, these are very artificial separations. These boundaries do not appear in the school or the community. Instead, they were created merely as a way to organize the material for the website, a way to think about how to represent the village. There are troubling implications of this structure. Does it imply that the Yup'ik Studies program is a non-academic program? Does it suggest that the community is not a part of the other two areas? We were troubled by this, and couldn't really reconcile the problem, but couldn't come up with another way to organize. Finally, it came down to the amount of material we had. We felt like these three areas could be richly presented with the work that we had gathered, and would gather in the future....The goal is that each pathway and each page will eventually exist in both English and Yup'ik.
>
> At this time some of the information is only in Yup'ik, some in English, and some in both languages.... The negotiation between and translation into the two languages was one of the most interesting and complex aspects of this project. At one point, there were seven adults and three students huddled around the computer for nearly an hour, discussing which Yup'ik word would be best to describe the Anglo sense of "Yup'ik Values." The term they came up with was "Qanruyutet," which roughly translates to "Yup'ik ways of thinking and believing....or Yup'ik ways of living....depending on the person you talk with." Although I obviously couldn't follow the discussion, I was fascinated that this term was not only so important that it required such thoughtful deliberation, but that it was also so difficult. It was experiences like this one....and other similar instances of deliberations over translation and representation that reminded me that my role was to facilitate, to provide structure and the means for the students and staff to do their own work. There was a fine line between providing the structure, and the desire to get the project up and going, and the danger of steering the work, or making choices that would not be culturally appropriate, or representative of the views of the people of Akula.
>
> I was also simply amazed by the students....they worked together so well. It was a rare moment to see a student working alone during the week. Typically, there would be two, three, or four students huddled around a computer....or a pile of writing or photos. I didn't realize until I talked to John, that there were mainstreamed

Yup'ik-English Calendar—produced by students at the Akula School, Kasigluk, Alaska.



Tengun (August)
"Flight of Birds"

ASGIILLEQ
Nellie Slim

ILEGVAK
Henry Charles

special education students in the room, and students with very low proficiency in English. Because students were working so closely together, and had such a strong motivation to build the site, differences in abilities.... were insignificant. Throughout the process, students were continually asking each other's opinions. Most of these conversations were in Yup'ik, although they occasionally spoke in English also. We were all amazed with how quickly the students mastered the software: PageMill and Photoshop. Even though they had never used the software, by the end of the first day they were experimenting and teaching me new applications of the programs. I think it was great for the Akula teachers to see that they didn't have to be masters of the technology, that if they could set up real tasks for kids, they could learn right along with them. It was also symbolic of the philosophy and values of the school and community to see the students select the photos of the Elders as the first photos to be scanned, before basketball or any others....

A few other observations and notes....As soon as people found out about the project....photos came pouring into the school. There were several stacks of photo albums, as well as boxes of photos. Some of them were black and white and went back to the sixties. Cauline Ferguson brought in the most photos with three decades of Akula photos. We've only just begun to sort through these, and I imagine an extensive online archive of photos. It takes time to scan photos and convert them into the right image size for the website, so this will take time. I think the website is affecting district policy also. Bev Williams, the curriculum/bilingual director, Richard Taylor, the technology coordinator and others, have all suggested that websites should become a place for students to celebrate their learning and to publish their writing.

On the last day of the first week, Levi Hoover's mother, an elderly Yup'ik woman, came in and watched the students for a couple of hours. She didn't say a word. She moved from station to station, watching the students working. As she left, she said a long Yup'ik word to Charlie Isaacs. I asked him what the word meant, and he said it didn't translate. I pushed him.... and asked him to try his best. He said that the word roughly translated to "These kids are hot stuff." And they are! Imagine moving from a world of seal oil lamps, no electricity, no airplanes, snowmachines or outboard motors....to walking into a classroom and seeing students working on an international network of computers. It is truly amazing to think that the lives of one generation have spanned such dramatic changes. It is difficult to comprehend.

It was interesting in the foregoing example to note that students made clear that the elders' stories had to come first, before their own stories, their particular social interests. Such decision-making speaks to their particular internalization of local cultural norms and their meanings.

In considering place, we were particularly interested in the way aspects of the Bread Loaf Program (and its Rural Teachers Network) have played out. A central feature of the Rural Teachers Network is the connection of kids and teachers across the United States around various kinds of writing—personal, oral histories, family stories, descriptions of the local environment, poetry, responses to some common literature. As they share work and receive responses, students gain a sense of just how diverse rural America is. This is something teachers speak about a good deal, in a sense representing a large and unexpected learning. Students also learn about a broad range of cultural stories, a natural means of learning about other places, getting beyond the local while having what is most local as a reference point. They are faced with questions about why responses to common literatures are often so different, why different metaphors occur, why there are similarities and differences in mother and father stories, and the like. Students begin to notice how much of their own, very local places show up in their work.

One interesting example of this was a multi-school reading of Bowhead, a poem about living in two cultures. It is set in Alaska and deals with the whale hunt. Students from Crownpoint, a native community in New Mexico, offered a host of responses, mostly in the form of questions. We present one of the responses.

> *I like how the author uses "destiny," it sounds sort of mystical. The poem can actually make you visualize a whale swimming underneath the ice, then surfacing and resubmerging again.*
>
> *It sounds like the whale is sacrificing itself for Inupiat. It makes me wonder if the whale wants to meet its destiny or if it is just inescapable. Why does the whale just give himself to Inupiat? In my opinion he should have at least tried to fight back.*
>
> VIRGINIA BURGESS, 14

A student from Barrow, Alaska responded as follows:

> *Dear Virginia:*
>
> *Yes, it sounds mystical but that is how us Inupiat whalers think. I go whaling every season and growing up with that makes it grow to be extremely mystical. You develop a very strong bond, but it's different. You said the poem makes you visualize a whale. Poets say image is the main thing in poems. That is a good thing to visualize stuff like that. You also said it sounds like the whale is sacrificing itself to the Inupiat. Well, it is like that. We, the Inupiat are sacrificing ourselves to the whales, not by death, but to go through the whaling process and be patient while waiting for the whale to come to you. That is all about the big bond between us and the whale....The Inupiat have been hunting whales for many centuries. It is our way of life. As the poem says, the whale is approaching its destiny and the Inupiat are awaiting their destiny. I think that tells the relationship between the two. That is why the whale gives himself to us and doesn't try to escape.*
>
> *Sincerely,*
>
> QAIYAAN HARCHAREK, 16

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After weeks of interaction around the poem and various points of view being expressed, the Crownpoint students sent along their Top 10 questions (which grew to 11):

1. How do you kill a whale?
2. How cold does it get over there during the summer, winter, autumn?
3. Do you eat the meat or cook it?
4. What are some traditions you have that involve animals and whales?
5. Do the stores there sell whale meat?
6. Is there such a thing as a Bowhead whale?
7. Where do whales dwell?
8. Do men do more than women in your area?
   e.g., running the house, paternal society?
9. What animals besides whales do you hunt for?
10. What weapons are allowed?
11. Do you consume the inner organs too?

These are cultural questions that served to stimulate even further exchange. The final stage of their work was poems written by the students about "living in two worlds." These were particularly moving and showed deep understandings of local circumstances. We present below one lengthy poem by Cherie DeVore from Crownpoint (which most everyone believed should be moved to publication):

"Living in Two Worlds" BY CHERIE DE VORE

My Grandmother's name is
  Helen White
Her Navajo name is Desbah
It means "Warrior Woman" in English
My name is Cherie De Vore
When I'm with her,
My name is Sha' ani'
It means "Older Young Woman."

When we are together,
We are in a world of our own
I tie the quilts
She sews the ends of them
Everyone is erased from our minds
No one comes to interrupt.

She speaks Navajo to me
And calls me Shi'Yazi
My friends call me Mushy Bear.

She teaches me the Jamez language
Of a feast we go to once a year
When the kachinas come down
From the mountains
And bless the houses of the pueblos.

From there,
My name is Sho'o'a'na
It means butterfly,
To show my side of indulgence
My grandfather shows up
He calls me ShushYaz.

It means Little Bear
He says I'm half bear
And that I have a strong soul
He has a song for every grandchild
Mine is a unique one.
He sings it to me when he sees me
My hair once black,
Is now a shade of exquisite brown
I am young,
But seem older to them
That is how I got my name.

My mom calls me Cherie,
Just plain and simple
When I'm with her,
I have a strong spirit
She is the gentle type
Never yells or screams
Everyone says I look like her.

My mother tells me stories
Of when she was growing up
She tells me of how
My grandmother used to be.

Since my grandmother is no
  longer here,
My mom took over
In trying to teach me
The values of my heritage.

I speak English more
Then Navajo or Jamez
But not very well.

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This kind of interchange across sites, even between countries can help bring a local place into greater perspective. The following account from Frederick, South Dakota provides the international dimension, growing from a search for local heritage.

The Finland Internet Connection, a project based at the Frederick, South Dakota elementary school, had its beginning when students did cultural heritage (Finnish) work. Last year the fifth graders wanted to do some more exploration into their Finnish heritage. One teacher talked to her husband who is knowledgeable about the Internet and computers. He was able to find some addresses for "key pals" through the Internet. The fifth grade teacher contacted a teacher in Finland and students started communication back and forth with key pals. The fifth graders in Finland were using it as an exercise to practice their English.

To enlarge their knowledge of Finland, the class brought in members of the community who knew about Finland and could speak Finnish. A community woman who had lived and taught in Finland served as a resource person. She showed slides and shared memorabilia she had of Finland and provided the cultural boost that led to more interest in the Internet connection. The Finnish community involved in the exchange happened to be located very close to where the community member had lived so she was able to explain to students what the area was like and what it was like for the students.

The superintendent then sought an Internet video communication process for the classroom. With the telecommunications studio in Frederick and the work that the superintendent had been doing with telecommunications, he realized that there would be an opportunity to hook up with Finland and that a face-to-face meeting over the Internet could be established. They finally got a connection that worked. The classes were able to set up a meeting where Barnard Elementary fifth grade students met at 7:00 a.m. in the Frederick studio to contact the Finnish students where it was 5:00 p.m. Finnish time. The television and audio connections were successful and the students met and talked for

My grandmother and my mother
Both taught me
To dance with the stars
They got me a jingle dress
As well as a fancy one
Bright colors and buckskin
Is what they are made of.

I dance the Ribbon Dance
For the Dine'
As well as the Spring Dance
For the pueblos
When my feather drops from
  my head,
I cannot pick it up
It is not polite or respectful
To pick it up while you are dancing
You must stop exactly
When the beat of the music stops
It is very complicated
It takes many years to learn.

When I'm with my father,
I am his welding assistant
We cut scraps of metal
And weld them together
He calls me Bumba
I have to measure
The inside of a pipe,
Go up on a crane,
And connect it to another pipe.

It is scary sometimes
I occasionally get burned
But he says to tough it out
I learn some math skills this way
And become better at geometry.

He teaches me things
About the area of pipes
That other students don't know
We listen to Jeff Foxworthy
And Roy D. Mercer
While we travel around
And work on power plants.

Now I know how to
Change a tire,
The transmission fluid,
The oil,
And I also know
Where all the parts of an engine are
I know which tool is which
And how to use all of them.

To make it clear,
He simply treats me
As if I were a man.
When I'm with one person,
I am different
My grandmother and I
Sew quilts and make yeast bread
My mother and I,
Practice the star's path
My friends and I
Are immature and childish
My father and I
Weld metal and work with tools.

My name is Cherie De Vore
That is my English name
Sha'ani' is my Navajo name
Sho'o'a'na is my Jamez name
And I,
Along with many others walk
  in two worlds.

CHERIE DE VORE

an hour. Throughout the hour the Finnish students gave reports on what it was like in their country. The Barnard reports were about South Dakota and the land that the students live in.

The students have since continued the face-to-face connection and some of the students have requested that they continue it next year. Some indicated that they were going to continue with the correspondence even during the summer at home.

PLACE AND THE ARTS

Student work around place also gives attention to the arts. The two accounts which follow—from San Juan Ridge (California) and western Maine—can be seen as representative of the work we reviewed. Overall, the arts were more visible this year than last year.

At the San Juan Ridge (Yuba Watershed Alliance), the Rural Challenge supported an arts program that linked children and community artists. The performances of the Grizzly Hill Middle School singers have thrilled the community. Their CD, "Winter on San Juan Ridge" was remarkable and represented the original work of large numbers of students in the school. The opening song written by students expressed a juxtaposition of the harshness of winter and the warmth of a family.[27]

A year ago we reported on the Maine Dance Program which traces its roots to Jacques D'Amboise's work with elementary school children in the Kingfield area.[28] The program continues, primarily through Rural Challenge support. In the 1997–98 school year, the dance program was tied closely to the social studies curriculum and to local history, involving students in telling an important aspect of local history through movement.[29] Final concerts are important community events. We outline below the work in grades 5 through 7.

In Grade 5, the dance was tied to the Civil War period, based around Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. When she wrote the book, she lived in Maine. Also, the dance included the Underground Railroad. There is a house in Kingfield which was actually part of the Underground Railroad network. The dance also had a theme from John Storer, a resident of Phillips, who in 1867 gave $10,000 to found Storer College in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia for former slaves. It is still in existence and its first president, Ann Dudley, was a graduate of Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.

Grade 6 honored, through dance, Paul Bunyon, tall tales and woodsmen in general—a tribute to an important logging tradition in the Kingfield area. And Grade 7 based its dance program upon Solomon Stanley's barn in Kingfield and on the following quote from Nancy Vose French:

> We liked to look at the shadow of Mt. Abram on nights like that and think of what was to come and be glad of its presence. We had work, a great deal of it, but it ended and then we were ready for fun. We'd line up at Solomon Stanley's barn and dance to Sam Spear's fiddle.

The students made Victorian walking skirts based on the work of Chansonetta Stanley Emmons (a famous Kingfield photographer and sister to the Stanley Twins, F.E. and F.O.). The stage-set was a timber-framed barn constructed by local craftsmen.

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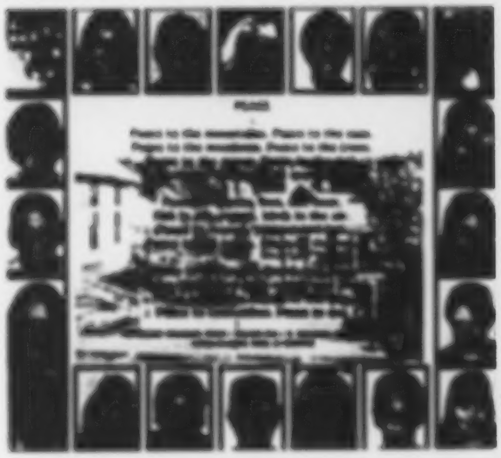
[27] A fuller account appears in the supplementary volume accompanying this report.

[28] Jacques D'Amboise is a dancer choreographer from New York City whose work with children has been particularly noteworthy in many parts of the United States.

[29] Over the years, the dance program has provided for many students a structure for continued work in the arts in high school and college.

Student Work in the Arts



CD cover and lyrics to the opening song of "Winter on San Juan Ridge."

The roads are rutted.
The Yuba's flooded.
The trees are quaking, loaded heavy with snow.
My daddy's truck died,
Down by the creek side.
We've got to walk wherever we go.
But Mama's singing,
Just as she's bringing,
Fresh homemade cookies, piping hot from the stove.
I'm happy to the bone,
In my Foothill home.
It's winter on The San Juan Ridge.

Student presentation at La Villa School, Llano Grande Center for Research and Development.

Students presenting their work at Peacham, Vermont.

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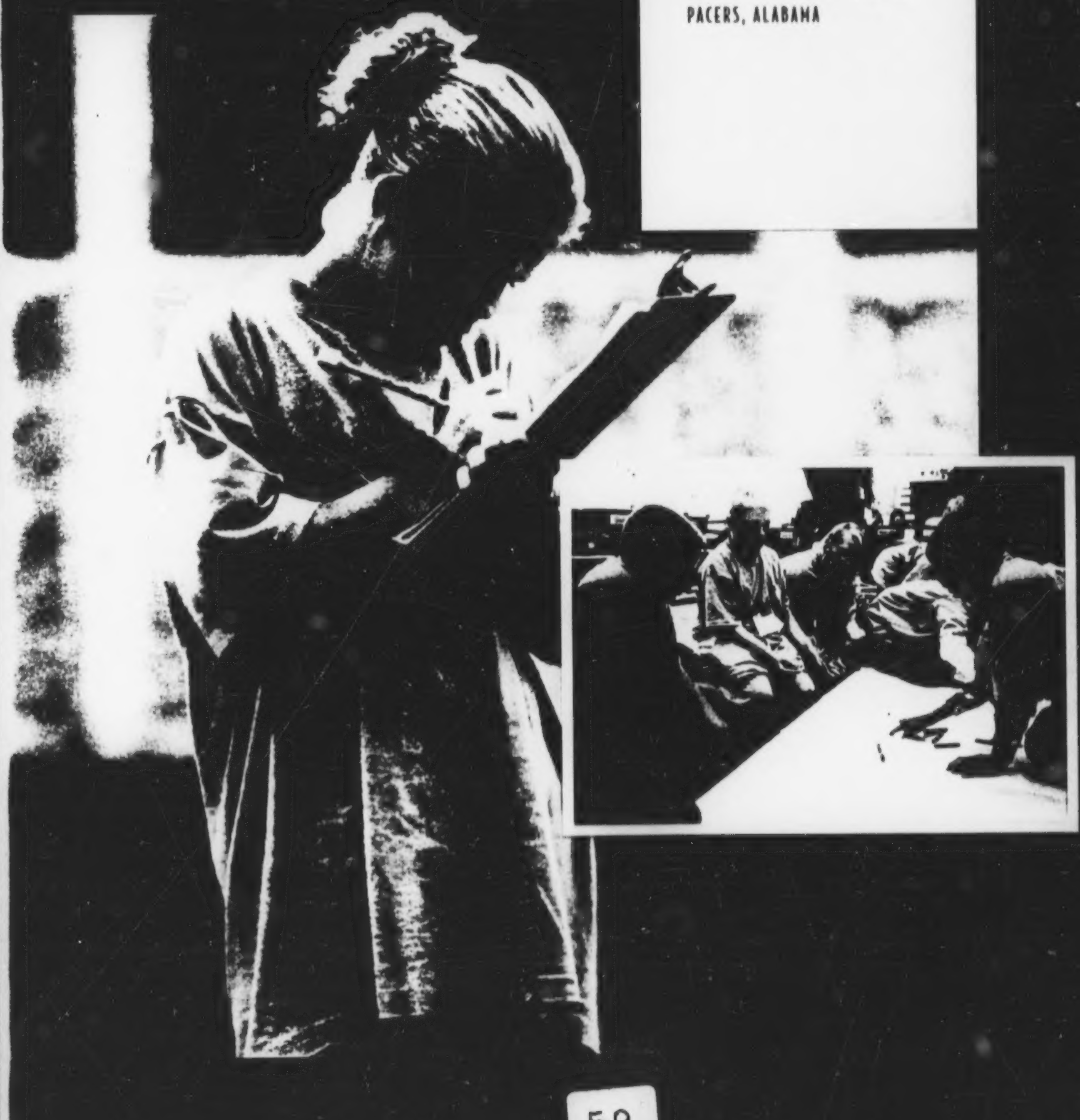
"It is the academic challenge that drives the work. If it wasn't challenging, folks wouldn't invest so much of themselves into it. Kids invest in stuff that matters."

CHRIS DAVIS, STAFF MEMBER,
PACERS, ALABAMA



Complexity

MOST WORK THAT HAS A PROJECT BASE and demands that students actually **do** something, in this regard engage in a performance, complete a multi-faceted task, tends to be complex. It is work leading to understanding. The work we discuss in this section of the report, and out of which our definition of complexity is drawn, has typically involved students having to do several different things, engage in a range of tasks, bring diverse learnings together, present their findings in multiple ways, such as in writing, through oral presentations, in some visual form via the computer or video, and has usually taken considerable time. It is work defined by teachers, students and parents as challenging. It is also work that matters to those doing it. When it matters, it tends to be seen as genuine work, of high quality, easily distinguishable from routine school work. A strong sense of reciprocity between school and community is evident, with students often making real and lasting contributions to the community while community members, many of whom have no direct connection to the school, enter into the schooling process in a more substantial way than is typical.

THE KWAN TAI TEMPLE

"In the 1850s, trapped in a country dominated by a dynasty gone bad, hundreds of Chinese escaped to the 'golden paved' streets of California."

KATE STANFORD, STUDENT, MENDOCINO, CALIFORNIA

The historical work related to the Kwan Tai Temple and the Chinese in Mendocino (the North Coast Rural Challenge Network) was, in the foregoing terms, complex and well done. Some of the initial interest was sparked by a review of the photographs of Mendocino high school graduates from the school's early years, some of whom were Chinese. This was followed by a set of critical questions posed by Bronwyn Rhoades, the history teacher, that served to guide the inquiry: When did the Chinese first come to Mendocino? Where did they live? How many graduated from the local high school? Where has the Chinese population gone? What did they leave behind?

Students learned to do historical research—how to read photographs, maps, historical accounts from journals and newspapers and conduct oral histories and historical interviews. Students spent many days reviewing the Mendocino Beacon, the local newspaper. Learning to make sense of one-hundred-year-old newspaper accounts is an important historical skill. They also learned how to record historical materials so that what they found could be useful to future historians.[50] Kate Stanford, a 9th grade student involved in the research project, wrote the account that follows.

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[50] Teachers appear to have learned over the last two years how important it is to prepare students to do high-quality, project-oriented work. A year ago, these skills weren't spoken about much. This year, we heard many teachers, at most sites, describe the need to scaffold such complex learning by helping students learn to develop good interview questions, conduct interviews, read primary documents, use archival resources, pose large questions followed by additional questions, present data in diverse forms, display information, present their work. In many cases, small projects are seen as places to help students learn how to do some of the tasks, with complexity then added in stages. Such efforts should lead to higher quality work.

The Kwan Tai Temple

In the 1850s, trapped in a country dominated by a dynasty gone bad, hundreds of Chinese escaped to the "golden paved" streets of California. Many of the Chinese who tried to make the journey to California were hoping to land in Monterey Bay or San Francisco Bay, but by mistake, some landed in Casper. These Chinese are the first recorded Chinese in Mendocino. In our Windows I class, we looked at the Sandborn maps of 1898, which proved that there were Chinese in Mendocino then. From the maps we could see houses and shops owned by the Chinese. Many Chinese lived in shanties on the headlands opposite Main Street. We learned that the Chinese mainly owned herb shops and laundries. Others worked in the local mill (which was located on the headlands). We also researched the Chinese in Mendocino by looking in the Mendocino Beacons from 1879, 1880 and 1881. From these we learned that there was much racism and prejudice towards the Chinese. Advertisements boasted that there were "no Chinamen cooks here," while articles sometimes referred to the Chinese as "Ching Chang Chinamen." Yet, the Chinese did have some sense of hope. There were enough Chinese in Mendocino to inspire and build the Kwan Tai temple. The Kwan Tai temple is a Taoist place of worship. It is named after Kwan Tai, an actual man who became a god because of his loyalty towards his ruler. The Chinese worship this god to remind themselves of their loyalty to each other. The Kwan Tai temple is located on Albion Street in Mendocino and it cost only about $13.00 to build. It is painted red and green: red inspires good luck and green inspires prosperity.

I learned a lot about the Chinese in Mendocino during this unit. When we began studying the Chinese, I didn't know how many had once been in Mendocino, nor did I know about the Kwan Tai temple. I learned that there was once a Chinese population of about 500 in Mendocino. I also learned about the prejudice towards them. During a lecture by Lorraine Hee Chorley, I learned that the Chinese left Mendocino during the depression to find work. Through learning about the Chinese, I learned how important they were (and are) to this community. The Chinese practically created the fishing industry. They also discovered how to harvest and fish abalone. I think it is very important to remember and honor the Chinese of Mendocino. One way to honor them is to recognize the Kwan Tai temple as a historic landmark and raise money to restore it. The temple is proof there was a large Chinese community in Mendocino. It is not only important for representing the Chinese who once lived here, but also for the people of Chinese heritage who still live here. They still worship at the temple on special occasions.

The movie our class made about the Chinese in Mendocino will hopefully keep the memory of the Chinese alive. Our entire class worked together on this project. To do this, we had to collaborate. I think working on this project improved my collaboration skills because I learned to work with people I didn't know well.

Hopefully, the movie we made will show people things they never knew about Mendocino and the Chinese of Mendocino. Hopefully it will spark emotion in people and will inspire them to learn from the mistakes of our past and thus change the future.

KATE STANFORD

"Hopefully, the movie we made will show people things they never knew about Mendocino and the Chinese in Mendocino."

KATE STANFORD

Another layer of complexity was added to the project when a segment of the class assumed responsibility for making a video—which documented the project for presentation and review. This involved a different kind of documentary work, involving yet another set of skills and media use. Students were joined in this phase of the work by a local professional filmmaker who had produced film for National Geographic and the Discovery Channel. The layering of complexity was evident as students pursued, alongside the primary research, matters of Chinese culture, including religious practices and their commitment to continue the work through a Kwan Tai Temple preservation project. In a large way, the students brought back into public consciousness a population that, while now small, was once larger and played an important role in forging the base for the town of Mendocino. Interestingly, as a follow-up to the work, students went to San Francisco Bay where they visited Angel Island, the site for the processing of immigrants from Asia. They heard many more stories of the hardships encountered by the Chinese. They also made a full presentation of their work to the National Trust and Historical Preservation Commission, which later gave $5,000 to the Kwan Tai Temple preservation project.

"The work we have been looking at seems so inventive. It seems larger than what even the teachers envisioned at the beginning. Few expected the work to be so good. There is so little unexpected in the typical work. The answers are known ahead of time. Moving away from that…can be difficult."

TEACHER, SOUTHWEST RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CONVOCATION

Those who reviewed the Kwan Tai Temple work, in response to our question about the quality of the work, noted in particular the following:

The research work was exceptional; students demonstrated high levels of skill in their use of historical materials.

The way students reviewed data was impressive—they were so careful and seemed to understand that they were creating an important database.

The final products—the photographs, maps, journal accounts, video—were visually attractive, engaging and thoughtfully presented.

Student understandings of the subject matter were impressive—they were able to relate their findings to other possibilities for historical research.

THE SCHOOLHOUSE BLIZZARD

The Schoolhouse Blizzard of 1888 project, completed by 4th graders in Henderson, Nebraska, represents another example of complexity. It took children out into the community, working with a variety of people, engaged them in historical research, computer design, and art, focused on careful, even poetic writing, became a play and was a critical element for the community museum, Immigrant House. Not only did the seven month project map the larger story of the "Schoolhouse Storm" but it also got students deeply into the immigrant, religious and agricultural history of the town.

The project had its beginnings with an overheard conversation at the Henderson, Nebraska post office concerning one family's love of their deceased horse, Old Frank, and the blanket they made from his hair. The subsequent historical inquiry by Susan Ratzlaff, the teacher, and her fourth-grade students resulted in the creation (by both the teacher and students) of an interdisciplinary project concerning an almost forgotten local historical event—The Schoolhouse Blizzard of 1888. The culminating public presentation, a theatrical reproduction of the event, filled the Heartland/Henderson auditorium with an audience of over 400 townspeople, almost 50 percent of the town's population.

During a recounting of the story of Old Frank by members of the Friesen family, mention was made of the "Schoolhouse Blizzard," an event that had been largely obliterated from the communal collective memory. Intrigued, because the event had happened in their Nebraska locale to early homesteaders of the region, some of whom were their ancestors, and because it was a story in which kids were the central figures, the class set about securing the details of the blizzard, a course which would lead them to pursue a history of the storm. Their explorations utilized a range of resources—the Nebraska State Historical Archives, Internet databases, and oral accounts. The work engaged students in historical, archival and genealogical research, interviewing, computer research, and theater production. The standard disciplines were naturally integrated as students learned vocabulary and spelling while examining passages of old journal entries and built upon their computer and research skills (while utilizing English, spelling, communication skills) as they accessed remote databases to untangle genealogical information, search out new source material and correspond with agencies and scholars who assisted their work.

Perhaps a measure of the success of any learning activity is how engaged the students are in continuing the inquiry, on building upon the core of information they have acquired, even after the predetermined activity has officially "ended." When students want to know more, pursue a path of exploration they themselves find particularly interesting, it is then that a spark for ongoing inquiry, for lifelong learning has been successfully ignited. Such was the case with Ms. Ratzlaff's class as students insisted on pursuing the name of a member of the story and one of the characters in the theatrical presentation who was known only as "the hired man." Relentless in trying to determine his identity, his background, students searched records, journals, newspapers and finally the graveyard in their successful attempt to name the unknown man.

The re-creation of the "Blizzard"—through theatrical storytelling—educated members of the community about an event which impacted the lives of many who had lived there 100 years earlier. Though fragments of the story had survived in the oral traditions of some few local families, the public telling inspired a communal recognition of the impact such natural occurrences as weather have had on the lives of people historically tied so closely to the land, so dependent on 'the elements' for their livelihood.[51]

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[51] We include in the supplementary volume accompanying this report a fuller account of the Blizzard project.

The Blizzard of 1888

It might be illuminating to present some of the actual work of students here. We begin with selected portions of the script written by the students followed by a series of stories prepared for a class newspaper.

NARRATOR 1: At around 4:00 that afternoon a light shower of snowflakes began to fall and laughter was heard in John W. Friesen's house since the Friesen children were visiting.

ISAAC: Gee, I've never seen this kind of dark in the middle of the afternoon. Hey where is the barn? Brother, sister look out the window.

PETER: We better go home if we want to make it before the storm gets any worse and Mom and Dad start to worry about what happened to us.

NARRATOR 2: They didn't think that it would get any worse, but little did they know, it would get much worse.

LITTLE KATHERINA: Oh, we can stay a little longer, can't we?

JOHN BOLT (HIRED HAND): I suppose we can stay a little longer. Maybe a half an hour.

NARRATOR 1: Minutes later, hard icy snowflakes began to fall.

NARRATOR 2: Soon a hard chunk of ice hit the window and startled the group.

LITTLE KATHERINA: Ahhhh, let's go home.

JOHN BOLT (HIRED HAND): Peter, Isaac: Okay, I'm with her, let's get out of here!

NARRATOR 1: The children didn't dress very warm so John's wife gave them some warm clothes.

WIFE: Here, John Bolt, use this coat and gloves.

JOHN JR: You can use my scarf.

WIFE: Katherina, this will keep you warm.

ISAAC: I don't want that coat.

JOHN BOLT: It's way too cold, you're going to wear it.

NARRATOR 2: Then John's wife warmed up some potatoes on the cook stove so the children could put them in their pockets to keep their hands warm.

NARRATOR 2: Then everyone got on the sled and said goodbye to John W. and headed west home.

WIFE: Here Peter these potatoes will work to put in your pockets to keep your hands warm.

JOHN BOLT: Thanks for the potatoes.

NARRATOR 3: As the group left John W.'s house, it wasn't long until the cold wind and snow pierced their bodies.

ISAAC: My potatoes are getting cold.

JOHN BOLT: It will be just fine.

KATHERINA: It's cold.

PETER: Quit whining, let's just hope we live.

NARRATOR 3: It seemed like there was a big white wall of snow, they couldn't see the mules in front of them.

SCENE 5

NARRATOR 1: The severe Blizzard was so blinding that the hired hand let go of the reins because he thought the mules would have a sense of how to get home.

NARRATOR 2: All of a sudden the mules bumped into something and came to a complete stop.

HIRED HAND: Peter, go see why the mules stopped.

PETER: OK

(He goes in front by holding on to the mules. He is in front of the mules and feeling around)

PETER: It's a haystack.

HIRED HAND: Let's get in the hay to keep warm since we don't know where we are.

NARRATOR 3: So the four of them buried themselves in the hay to wait out the storm.

The cast of "The Blizzard of 1888."

> **"Students are doing different things. It isn't everyone doing the same thing. In this regard, it is more interesting. The learning possibilities are greater."**
>
> **TEACHER, SOUTHEAST RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CONVOCATION**

JACOB FRIESEN AND THE BLIZZARD OF 1888

LOCAL FARMER SAVES THREE OF HIS CHILDREN

Jacob Friesen, a local farmer just north of the town of Henderson, risked his own life as he went out into the blizzard to save three of his children. The hired hand and Jacob's three small children had gone to visit an older brother when the "Blizzard of 1888" struck this area. Jacob and his wife were at home worried about their family, so Jacob went into the storm and followed his fence. When he reáched the end of his fence, Jacob called out his children's names, and they answered back because the hired hand and the children had buried themselves is a haystack. Jacob has become a local hero.

If you would like to learn more about this wonderful story, just log onto the York County Historical Association's home page on the internet and read Garrett Friesen's story about Jacob and Anna. Their internet address is **www.dsenter.com/ne/york**.

THE WESTPHALEN GIRLS

It all started on a nice day in Dodge County, Nebraska, when most of the school children were walking home from school. Two girls who were walking home while struggling through the frigid blizzard were Eda and Matilda Westphalen, ages 13 and 11. The Westphalen's mother, Mrs. Peter Westphalen, watched with worry through a frosted window in their home for their return, but they never returned home. Later their bodies were found lying close by each other in an open drifted field. The older sister had put her wrap on her younger sister for her to keep warmer. The story of the Westphalens' tragic death in that blizzard was well known across the United States and these few words were written in their memory:

"I can walk no further, sister,
I am weary, cold and worn;
You go on, for you are stronger;
They will find me in the morn."
And she sank, benumbed and weary,
With sobbing cry of woe,
Dying in the night and tempest;
Dying in the cruel snow.
"Try to walk a little farther,
Soon we'll see the gleaming light,
Let me fold my cloak around you,"
But her sister cold and white
With snowdrift for a pillow,
Fell in dying sleep's repose,
While the snow came whirling, sifting,
till above her form it rose.
Search in western song and story,
And discover if you can,
Braver, grander, noble action
In the history of man;
Than the silent heroism of the
child who, in her woe,
Wrapped her cloak about her
Sister, as she struggled through
the snow.

Laci M. Friesen, Reporter

THE CHILDREN'S BLIZZARD

The Blizzard of 1888 was called, "The Children's Blizzard" because it happened just when the children were going home after school. There were a lot of children that died walking home so that is how it got its name. There were lots of sad stories about the children walking home, but some of the blizzard stories ended happily.

Rachel Rohren, Reporter

JACOB FRIESEN AND THE BLIZZARD OF 1888

Jacob would always listen to what his children said when they got a phone call. Anna would say, "Oh, Jacob, are you rubbering again?" We think their family called it rubbering because there was a rubber you put in your ear or because the word rubbering sounded like a low German word.

Kristin Hiebner, Reporter

BLIZZARD SONG

Our fourth grade class wrote a song about "Jacob Friesen and the Blizzard of 1888" with the help of the music teacher, Lynn Hall. The song is sung to the tune of "The Streets of Laredo." We will sing the song during the play so people can hear what it sounds like. Here are the words to the song:

> A long shadowed day in the west of York County
> The twelfth of the year I remembrit' to be.
> No signs of misfortune around us did gather,
> So off on a sleigh ride my children did speed.
> How quicKly things changed in the west of York County
> Rollin' in from the sandhills the clouds did appear.
> How hard it was snowin', and I quickly goin'
> Out to find those in danger my family so dear.
> I wandered about in the fields of York County,
> This fateful day in the year eighty-eight.
> My prayers were all answered, my loved ones delivered.
> I'll forever recall this miraculous date.

Brandon Rader, Reporter

TRENT SIEBERT IS RELATED TO JACOB AND ANNA

I never knew I was related to Jacob and Anna Friesen until Marion Friesen told me that my Grandma Beverly Friesen's dad, Herman Janzen, was the son of Anna Friesen. Anna was a daughter of Jacob and Anna Friesen, so my great-great-great-grandparents are Jacob and Anna Friesen.

Trent Siebert, Reporter

JACOB FRIESEN AND THE BLIZZARD OF 1888 CAST

Randi Bergen	Narrator #1
Carly Kroeker	Narrator #2
Laura Epp	Narrator #3
Brent Epp	Lights
John McMenamin	Left Spot
Brandon Rader	Right Spot

The Blizzard of 1888 Hits Bradshaw

Collin Quiring	Henry Shallenberger
Michael Robbins	Bradshaw Farmer #1
Trent Siebert	Bradshaw Farmer #2
Aaron Roth	Bradshaw Farmer #3
Rachel Rohren	Bradshaw Neighbor

Immigrant Health Inspection

Devin Gay	Gerhard Abrahams
Keshae Friesen	Katherina Abrahams

Two Sisters in the Snow

Whitney Hedrick	Mrs. Peter Westphalen
Andrea Peters	Eda Westphalen
Melissa Hiebner	Matilda Westphalen
Laci Friesen	Search Party
Keshae Friesen	Search Party
Melanie Friesen	Search Party

JACOB FRIESEN AND THE BLIZZARD OF 1888

WHO WAS THE HIRED HAND?

This year we were doing a play about Jacob Friesen, but there was one problem. We didn't know who the hired hand was that lived with them during the blizzard. He was with Jacob's three children in the haystack during the storm.

So we started doing some research, and we thought that maybe somebody that was related to Jacob and Anna Friesen would know the hired hand's name, but none of them could remember his name. So some of us went to Amy Friesen's house after school, and when we got there we started talking, and we asked her if she remembered the hired hand's name, and she said, "Yes, I do. It was John Bolt."

Then we received an 1885 census record from the York County Historical Association, and on Jacob and Anna's records, it showed a hired hand, and his name was Henry Marteshentz that was living with Jacob and Anna in 1885. Now we aren't sure which hired hand worked for them in the year 1888, so for our stories, we went with the first name we found, John Bolt.

Melanie Friesen

SILK WORMS

The first winter that Jacob and Anna were in their own house they wanted to make some money, so Jacob decided to buy some silkworms. Throughout the winter the silkworms spun silk. For food for the silkworms, Jacob planted a mulberry tree. Then in the summer Jacob gathered the silk and gave it to Anna, but there was only enough for one silk blouse for her. That was the end of their venture.

Melissa Hiebner, Reporter

JACOB BUYS LAND IN AMERICA

When Jacob Friesen moved to Henderson, he bought land in York County which sold for $6 an acre. But since he had saved money from Russia, he could pay in cash. So the railroad only made him pay $3.50 an acre when he bought the southwest quarter of the NE ¼ of section 31. The picture above [which we have not included] was provided by Amy Friesen, granddaughter of Jacob and Anna.

Michael Robbins, Reporter

ADAM DISCOVERS THAT HE'S RELATED TO JACOB

I didn't know that I was related to Jacob Friesen until I called my grandma to find out that it was true. I found out that my great-great-grandpa was Jacob Friesen, which was in the Blizzard of 1888. My grandma's name is Alvina and before she married my grandpa, she married a man who was related to Jacob Friesen. But then he died, and she married L. G. Dovolt, my grandpa.

Adam Norris, Reporter

TELEPHONE RUBBERING

One year for Christmas, Jacob Friesen gave all of his children their own telephone. He had to pay for the phones of course, and he had to pay for the wires and the poles. His children had a party for the wires and the poles. His children had a party line and the line number they had was number 10. Each child had their own phone number, like 1 short ring and 2 long rings. That was how someone called you in those days.

THE TOMBSTONE PROJECT

Complexity is also visible in the cemetery project carried out in Elm Valley, South Dakota. The Tombstone Project was undertaken by junior-level students in their computer class where they were learning about databases. The class went out to Savo Cemetery (a local cemetery with many Finnish gravestones) to collect data on the tombstones for their database. Each student was assigned a row of headstones to document whatever they could decipher from the tombstones. They recorded such data as: name, date of birth, date of death, and inscriptions (bible verses, ranks in military, children's names and so forth).

From the data that the whole class collected, the students were able to create a database that was merged from all the student files. From this database the students generated charts to see in what years most of the people died, the average age of people at death, and even how many people from each different name or family were buried there. These data led students into considerations of plagues and diseases that had broken out in a certain year, if the crops were bad and people moved, and migrations of people into the surrounding communities. On some of the tombstones there was a lot of Finnish which the students had translated through a local resource person.

One student commented: "By collecting this data, I was able to learn a lot more about my family." Another student said: "The project helped me learn more about my community in which we found out who the original settlers were. As far as finding out more about my 'roots,' I learned that my original name was 'Maunula.' However, somewhere down the line of generations, someone in my family dropped the 'la' from my name. I think that the most interesting part of this project was the different tombstones and the different family names." In all, 344 records were documented and will provide a permanent record for Savo Cemetery. There are plans to do all the cemeteries in the Elm Valley District.

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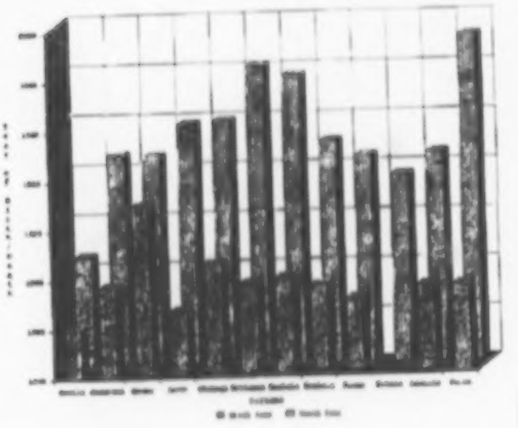
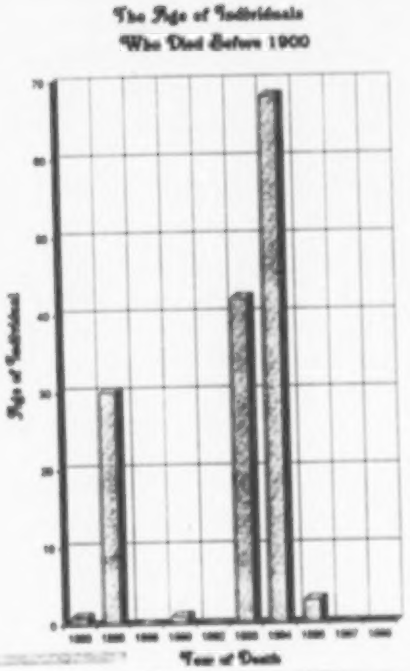
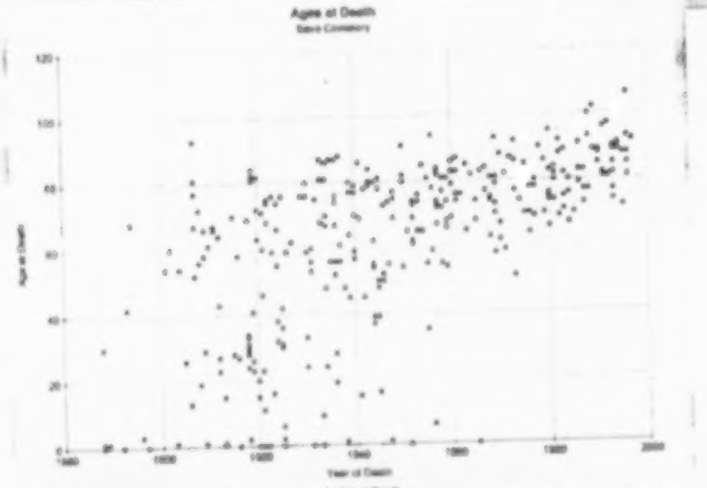
The Tombstone Project

Veterans of War
Surname, Year of Birth/Death







Examples of charts recording data gathered by students working on the Tombstone Project.

"These kids are ready and capable of making meaningful contributions NOW, not ten years from now when they are 'income producing' adults. These kinds of things [actual work in the community] are changing people's attitudes about kids. They realize you don't have to have a high school diploma to be a citizen or you don't have to be a certain age or have a certain level of education at a certain kind of university to have an opinion that matters."

JON GRAVES, EDUCATOR,
SEASIDE PARTNERS, OREGON

Student Development of Expertise

PROJECT-BASED WORK THAT ASSUMES A PERFORMANCE BASE, which was the case for much of what we reviewed, tends to enhance greatly students' academic understandings and skills. Students did not just learn about history, websites, science and their communities, they became historians, website developers, scientists and active citizens. In a larger sense, they joined a community of historians. Their work certainly gives them a connection to professionals beyond schools. In the best of circumstances, this is what educators and parents most desire for students in schools. In part, this relates to the development of particular dispositions, what the Coalition for Essential Schools calls "habits of mind;" it also relates to the development of critical inquiry skills and academic content that inspires deeper engagement.

We have discussed in the previous section a number of accounts of students engaged in historical, scientific, and social research related to their local places. While closely related to the idea of expertise, we develop that theme further here—that belief that students can do more, actually do the kinds of work associated with historians and writers and scientists. Such work increasingly brings forward a performance orientation—which facilitates such a pedagogy. It also calls upon teachers and students to think about assessment differently, with a view that the product—the video, the oral history, the data sets on water quality or the local economy—are more important than tests which focus on narrow displays of information.

STUDENTS AS TECHNOLOGISTS

In most rural settings, schools have most of the computers and much of the expertise. In some settings, such as Mendocino, the school system is the Internet provider for the community. It is also the case that students tend to be particularly knowledgeable about computer uses, including the Internet. "Students as technologists," developers of websites, "teachers" of computer use and consultants to local businesses, comes through in many sites across the Rural Challenge.

With support from PACERS, for example, Kendrick Kidd, a tenth grader at Packers Bend in Alabama, organized and directed the wiring of the school for computer networking. Teachers at his school suggest that "there is little he is unable to do with the computer—whether the task is technical, such as wiring a building or repairing a machine, or operational, such as using the computer for multiple uses." The result of Kendrick's work, which now involves many other students, is that Packers Bend is the first high school in the state that has designed, built, and now manages its own computer network. And students at the Minnesota New Country School have developed a highly sophisticated website for the Rural Challenge which they also manage. The school is now filled with students possessing extraordinary computer skills. Overall, excellent technology production work abounds across the Rural Challenge.[52]

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[52] We have been impressed by the attention to technology use in Rural Challenge sites. The level of skill seems particularly high and it shows in students' presentations around their project work. Interactive systems have grown considerably over the past two years, reaching to the smallest schools and communities.

Monroe, Alabama students setting up a computer network.

We were especially impressed by the community web pages developed by students in the Applied Economics course at Clear Lake, South Dakota, primarily because the work, though relatively new, was of such high quality. Not only were the designs interesting and well done, but the students who had produced them could speak so authoritatively about the work and about aspects of the local community. The teacher involved in the course, Karlys Wells, could say, "We are learning the related technologies together, getting better each week." [33] Each web page for a local business or agency in the community demanded design work and active negotiation with "a client." When finished, it is there for everyone to see. It is, in this regard, public work, able to be critiqued in a public manner. Alongside the work with local enterprises, the students are also developing a database on the community—the annual rodeo, education, economic development, activities, recreation, news, weather, sports, history, cultural issues, links to other parts of South Dakota and the region. There is even information about housing and land costs as well as economic opportunities—essentially recruitment material designed to attract new people to the area. Students have also indicated their willingness to serve as web searchers, getting information for community members. The local environment has become far more visible to the students and to community members. And students are seen as learning something important.[34]

At St. Paul (Virginia), websites built by students now relate to most courses. Matt Pritchard, a student, along with a student web staff, have trained various teachers in the school as well as large numbers of students to develop the course websites. The physics website is the most recent and it includes the labs and various course exercises. The sound project, "The Physics of Appalachian Musical Instruments," is being put on the site in its entirety. Community interest in the work is high and Matt has been asked to develop the town's homepage and neighboring schools are seeking assistance from the St. Paul web staff in getting their courses on the web. The sophistication here is exceptional.

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[33] To make the kinds of changes being called for in the Rural Challenge, teachers need to be willing to learn alongside their students. In many settings, teachers are beginning to accept this kind of challenge. We acknowledge, however, it is also fresh ground.

[34] It gets beyond the more common statement, "We are studying X in science." At Clear Lake, this course is the connection to the community. The school as a whole, though, has not yet joined the effort. But there is optimism about that potential.

As the Rural Challenge has developed, another form of student expertise in technology has come in video making. Through the Appalachian Media Institute, developed by Appalshop in Whitesburg, Kentucky, large numbers of students are learning to be video producers, focusing on Appalachian history, attitudes and traditions. Rhonda Thacher, from Shelby Valley High School, in eastern Kentucky, produced a documentary last year called *Black and Blue*, which looked at domestic violence from the victim's perspective. She notes, "we had interaction with actual battered women....Domestic violence is a lot more common than we thought and when you talk about the severity, it is really powerful."

At our various Regional convocations we were treated to a large number of video presentations of exceptional quality that related to the local community and were produced by students. Several schools, in fact, have well-equipped video production facilities. We reported earlier on the video production work in Mendocino. We should mention, as well, the film work of students in St. Paul (Virginia), Chetek (Wisconsin), Edcouch-Elsa (Texas), and Mariposa (California).

STUDENTS AS ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTISTS

Through courses in environmental science and biology, students in the Yampa River Valley Project (Colorado) are becoming active scientists of the local watershed.[55] The 165 mile long Yampa River ties this northwest Colorado valley together. It is the river that four of the five partner school districts—Hayden, Moffat County, South Routt County, Steamboat Springs, and Granby—have in common. And because the Yampa River is one of the most biologically intact rivers in the West, it provides a particularly fertile focus of inquiry for the student researchers who call the Yampa Valley home.

As the river winds its way down from the Flat Tops Wilderness Area of Colorado, it flows past lush hay meadows to Steamboat Springs, continuing to Juniper Canyon, Cross Mountain Canyon and the Yampa Canyon to connect with the Green River in Dinosaur National Monument. The river is impacted by the diverse interests which inhabit the valley—coal mines, the Hayden power plant, agriculture, Cattlemen and Women's Associations, the Division of Wildlife, and tourism—making this natural resource a catalyst for conversations among groups of people who have historically had very different interests from, and at times rivalries with, one another. The communal concern for the river and the recognition of its significance to the valley has become the primary source of relationship-building across the communities in the valley. Now, in the words of one community member, "We're all sitting in the same room talking."

Utilizing students as researchers conducting water tests, studying the sediments, and measuring the pH, outside governmental agencies have been provided with much needed information and, at the same time, students have been engaged as stewards of their area. This sort of relevant "real life" research necessitates a quality of work that is different from that which results from more standard text-based instruction. Acknowledging the difference in levels of engagement and resulting quality, students from Yampa Valley expressed concern about the mediocrity that results from "busy work" and felt that as a consequence, "Nobody strives to get any better." As one student stated, "If students had something interesting so that they could see a point to what they were learning, I think there would be a lot more interest and a lot higher grades, a lot higher enthusiasm in the school." We heard similar sentiments at all our Regional Convocations.

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[55] We include a full report on one of the scientific investigations of a group of middle school students in the supplementary volume.

The opinion of the community reflects a similar sentiment. Engaging students in work that is beneficial to the commonwealth addresses mutual issues. One local Yampa Valley community member commented:

> **Small towns don't realize the resource they have in their schools because if you've got a problem to solve in your community that requires trigonometry, the chances are that the only people who know how to do it are in the twelfth grade of the local high school....If you think of that school as a resource, you have a fresh group of people every year learning trigonometry....You can call them up on the phone...."Do you want to send somebody down?" and they would know what's going on.**

A Yampa Valley teacher, Charles Leech, agreed: "It seems so much more sensible than simulated problems when there's plenty of real ones. When students are engaged at this level of real life research/problems, they respond by generating questions of their own." It could be argued that a deeper level of inquiry results when Yampa Valley students are dipping their buckets into the river, taking samples, monitoring the flow of water, and patiently waiting for their test results.

In order to give students a larger picture of the river, instructor Norm Yoast, of Craig Middle School, drove students along its 165 mile length so they could see how what started as a shallow, rather unimpressive trickle of water grows into a deep, wide body of rushing water as a result of the many tributaries that feed into it along the way. As students traveled to other areas of the river, they saw firsthand the changes in the volume and flow, triggering their own provocative questions. One student asked and postulated an answer to her own question—"Why does alkalinity keep going up so much? If there is more water, shouldn't it be lower?" She then hypothesized that perhaps it was due to the impact of agriculture which is so prevalent in that area.

> **"I'm in a unique situation because my principal has given me a van that's parked outside my door every morning....I have essentially 90 minutes that I can have these kids, 'cause I can throw lunch in there and we can take off together and be gone. I stick a note on my door, 'Gone to River.'"**
>
> **[OUT OF THE 180 CALENDAR DAYS OF THE LAST SCHOOL YEAR, NORM YOAST, THE TEACHER, HAD HIS STUDENTS OUT 167 DAYS—THE EQUIVALENT OF A MILE OF RIVER A DAY.]**

Having a van available makes the Yampa work more possible. This is also the case in the Colorado Charters where so much of student work takes place "in the field." In Mariposa, California, given the enlarging role of students as community researchers, genuine scientists working alongside researchers from Yosemite, the district has outfitted a van—called the Mobile Education Research Lab. It has storage facilities, several workstations, and a variety of lab equipment, including provisions for water quality testing. As schools begin to do more in community settings, such travelling lab facilities will likely become more common.

In Eastport, Maine, students are working as scientists, becoming more able to communicate with a community of scientists outside of the school. We provide a fuller story on Eastport because the context is so interesting—though it is a context with which many rural communities can identify.

Eastport, Maine, was once a thriving port city. Along with Halifax, Portland, Boston and New York, it remains one of the major deep water ports in the Northeast. Originally a small island, now connected to the mainland by causeway, there isn't really anywhere in Eastport that you can not see the water. Though never the economic or population center of its counterparts, Eastport created over the years a thriving economic community based on fishing, lumber and trade goods. Many of the fine houses of this period remain but much of business and trade has left due to repeated economic downturns which have devastated the local economy.

What remains in Eastport is an unparalleled and largely unspoiled beauty. The deep water port is part of the gift that the city enjoys as a result of the Cobscook and greater Passamaquoddy Bay ecosystem, which are part of the larger Fundy Bay ecosystem. Fundy is home to some of the highest tides on the face of the earth (56 ft.) and Cobscook some of the highest in United States (35 ft.). The Cobscook/Passamaquoddy Bay system is also one the most productive bio-ecological systems north of the tropical rainforests. Mean tide in Eastport is around twenty feet and twice each day the passing tide leaves miles of mudflats exposed to the sun. The daily fluctuations of tide leave literally *acres of clams* and other life exposed.

Shead High School is on the southeastern edge of the town of Eastport. It has struggled with many of the same issues with which rural schools over the whole country have had to contend. The decades of economic decline have taken their toll on the population of Eastport but also the outlook of its inhabitants. "Is there a future here?" is an ongoing question.

The 1980s and 1990s have been hard on both the Eastport and Washington County economies. Many people have left the region with the successive collapses of herring and cod fisheries and the mechanization of the lumber and pulp wood industries. Many of those who are left depend on some combination of skill and diversified labor for their livelihood. The clamming and sea urchin industry, largely a cottage industry of local buyers, is a major economic resource of the area.

Two young teachers, Stephanie Allard, a biology teacher, and Scott Fraser, an industrial arts teacher, have come to Eastport within the last three years. Although they were new to the community, they were able to carry on place-based work inherited from the previous Annenberg Rural Challenge Project Director.

At first, their reaction to this inheritance was mixed. Neither Allard nor Fraser were from Eastport and they felt self-conscious teaching about a "sense of place" in a place that they barely had a sense of. The original project had two major foci. One was to create a research project in which students would monitor water quality and the condition of the local mudflats and clam beds. This information was necessary for sustaining the clams and also monitoring red tide and other pathogens. The student data were expected to fill a gap in the state environmental monitoring system as cutbacks had not only decreased staff but also reduced lab availability. The Annenberg Rural Challenge project, then, was designed to fill a local need as well as provide good scientific training for students.

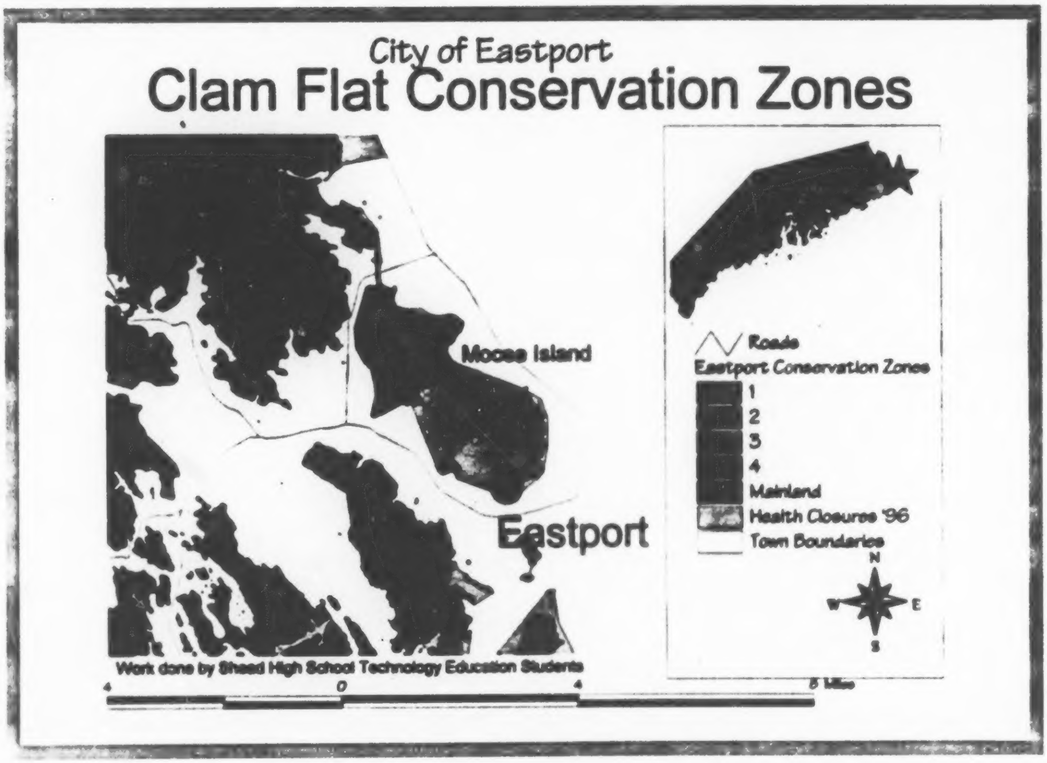
The second part of the project involved the industrial arts program and was centered on building a marine lab on the school property. The lab was to be constructed from two 40 x 15 trailers which were purchased at auction. The plan was to join these two trailers to house the laboratory with refrigeration and tanks to preserve specimens.

While both the town and the school stood to benefit from these projects, there were complications to overcome. Collecting samples related to the tidal conditions meant being out at the mud flats in all kinds of weather and also when the tide was low, which did not always match times for school or class. The construction project necessitated setting up saws and lumber and then cleaning them up.

So the task of setting up, framing a window and cleaning up in a forty-five minute period was all but impossible. To accommodate this project and other similar interests, the school moved to two hour periods for classes. This meant an adjustment of many schedules but seems to have worked out well for the school.

Fraser also teaches classes in computer science in the high school and has integrated a computer mapping component into one of his computer classes. This program integrates data from global positioning satellites to create a very precise map on which the data gatherers in Allard's class display their data. These maps are then dated, saved and forwarded to a number of different agencies, one of which is the local town office where clammers have to call or come to find out the current condition of the flats and learn about which are closed and so on.

Fraser related a story about a parent who called him one night very upset about the computer class passing as "industrial arts." He thought industrial arts should be about welding, construction and mechanics, trades that someone could use to get a job locally. The parent clammed for part of his livelihood and was upset that computer science seemingly had little to do with the local economy. Fraser explained what the course was about and what the goals were. The issue was not mentioned again until the class produced its first maps for the local town office. These maps were carefully colored to convey the exact boundaries of areas that were closed or under study at the time. The town office copied these maps and distributed them to the clammers. A town officer who knew Fraser later told him that the man who had questioned him about the viability of the computer work was the proudest father in the room when the map came out, proclaiming: "My son helped make this map."


City of Eastport
Clam Flat Conservation Zones
Moose Island
Eastport
Roads
Eastport Conservation Zones
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Work done by Shead High School Technology Education Students
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8 Miles

An elementary student in Mendocino, Naomi Marshall, described the community-oriented work she and others have been engaged in around science. Her description provides insights into an area-wide collaboration about rainfall.

> Our project is about comparing rainfall data throughout western Mendocino County. It was fun to compare my rainfall data to everyone else's, and to read all of their comments. We also had a video conference with Anderson Valley schools about our locations on the map, and compared our rainfall data on the coast with theirs. We noticed that sometimes there was less rainfall closest to the ocean and more in the hills a little further inland. The most rainfall we measured at our site in a 24-hour period was 4.5 inches on 11/26/97. After that, the storms kept coming and didn't let up until May. We think that it's good to participate in a community project, learn more about the weather, and have fun too! Thanks!

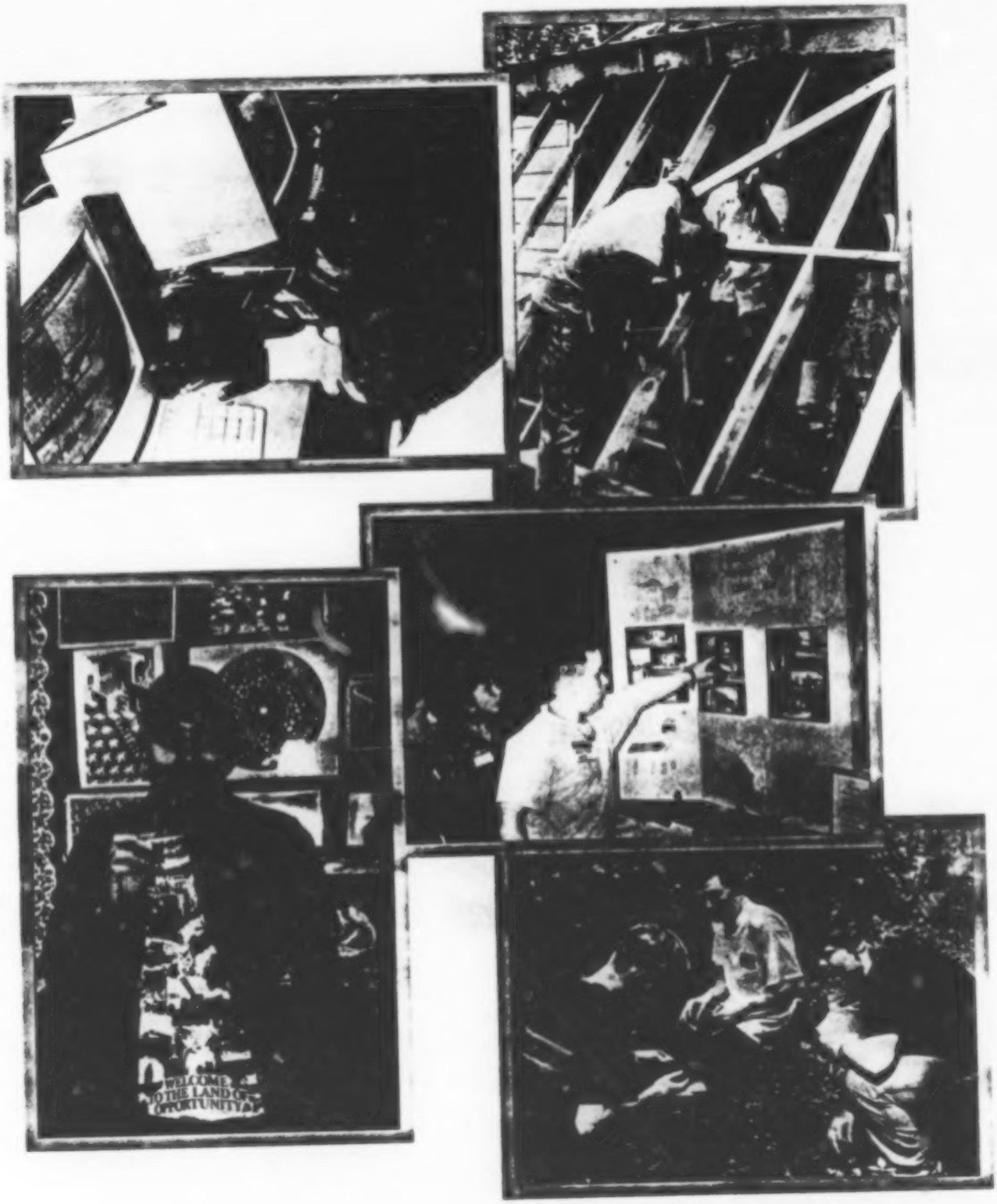
These kinds of cross-site comparisons in science and other fields are becoming more common, facilitated by the Networks and Clusters around which the various Rural Challenge projects have been organized. As we have noted at several points, this sharing of work makes it more powerful, generally assuring that students give the work more care. The teacher is, in such cases, not the only reader of the work.

STUDENTS AS GENUINE CITIZENS

Attention is being given in various Rural Challenge communities to the need to think of students as genuine citizens of communities. "Students as Citizens" is more than learning *about* participation; it is active participation in the community. Community Service is one direction that has changed greatly—in elementary/middle schools as well as high schools. But it has also come to mean preparing critical reports for the community and joining with adults on community committees. The example which follows addresses well this particular conception. We add a good deal to this formulation of students as citizens in the section on "importance to the community" and the section of this report devoted to Mutuality. Our purpose here is to provide a space holder for this growing Rural Challenge conception.

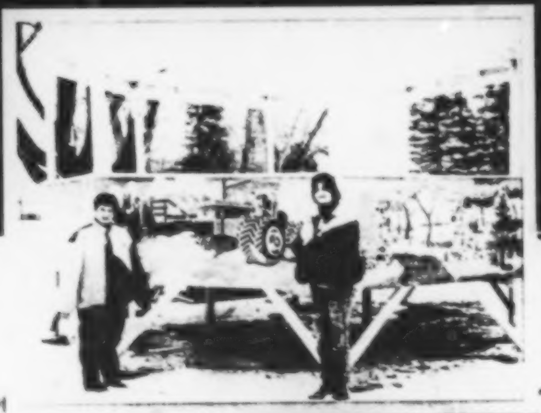
Six classes at the Broadway Middle School in Seaside, Oregon, for example, offered to the Seaside City Council on June 11, 1998 their recommendations for community development. Heidi Orr, who spoke on behalf of the school's business and management research team, reported on the group's survey of student buying habits which revealed a surprisingly large monthly expenditure and an annual total of $363,744—which she noted, went heavily into Portland, some two-and-one-half hours distant, where "variety and better service" exist. She noted that, "if young citizens are to be encouraged to shop locally, there is a need to better understand [young citizens'] needs." She added, at a later point, in regard to plans for a recreation center, "why are adults deciding what kids are going to do?" City Councilors were enormously impressed by the quality of the research work and the presentations. It was seen as a partnership between students and adults—community citizens working together.

Developing Expertise


WELCOME
TO THE LAND OF
OPPORTUNITY

"The work I've done this year is some of the most prized work I've done in my life."

SANDI SCHWERT,
KICKAPOO STUDENT



Importance to the Community

WE SAW VERY LITTLE STUDENT WORK THAT COULD NOT BE VIEWED as important to the community in the sense that it could add cultural, historical and scientific value. This is not to say, however, that it was always thought of in these terms.

We follow this student work section of the report with an extensive account of Mutuality—which relates to this large exchange between the work of students and schools and communities. A large premise of the Rural Challenge is that schools and communities will become overlapping institutions. In part, this represents a shift in the conventions. It incorporates the view that students are citizens, important resources, able to make valuable contributions to community life as they enlarge their own learnings and understandings.

RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY NEEDS

Responses to community needs abound across Rural Challenge sites: In 1994, for example, the Chetek School (in Wisconsin) responded to the community's need for a newspaper. First published once a month, it is now published twice a month. It recently received a national award from *USA Today* to honor the response of the school and the students to the community's need for effective communication. Community members have been vocal in their support of this venture.

The staff of the newspaper is composed almost entirely of students, who do all the research, writing and layout, take most of the pictures, and sell ads to the community to help offset the cost of production. The students put in time on weekends and evenings and are now getting paid minimum wage for their efforts. During the past year, the student editor of the paper traveled to New York City where he helped give a workshop on the role of youth as active citizens in their communities at the United Nations. Two other students from Chetek traveled to Texas, as part of a Youth Press Exchange project to learn more about urban and rural youth issues. The purpose of the Youth Press Exchange is to help young people assume a larger role in organizing youth to engage their respective communities more fully on issues around learning and how it can be improved. In June 1998, as part of the Youth Press Summer Conference at Weyerhaeuser, Wisconsin, which was aimed at enlarging students' skills as journalists and producers of community newspapers, students from all the New Paradigm Schools (Birchwood, Chetek, Weyerhaeuser, Flambeau, Winter, Bruce, Lake Holcombe, Shell Lake, Turtle Lake, and Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe) studied photography and darkroom technique, interviewing, and graphics. They also made field trips to the Minneapolis Tribune news room and photo lab, the American Institute of Computer Imaging and Animation, and the Wisconsin Education Communications Station.

Though the Chetek paper, like others being formed in New Paradigm Partners communities, is heavily focused on school news, it contains community news as well. It has proven to be an exceptional learning tool as students have had to work through the struggles of virtually all new journalists. We were told about the situation in which a truck, getting out of gear, rolled into a propane tank and burned down a cabin at one of the local resorts. This incident made front page news.

However, the students interviewed only the people whose house had burned—not the owner of the vehicle. When the story came out, there were some "hard feelings" concerning how the reporting was conducted. As the paper's advisor noted, "....the kids had to deal with that—should they have done it differently?....Was (what they said) true exactly?....Or were they only listening to one point of view?" This is important learning.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Community contributions sometimes come through active student leadership or by being part of an activity which helps transform community views about education and possibility.

D.J. Shepard, a student from Weldon, North Carolina, and a participant in the Algebra Project, described to us how he got involved in the many facets of the Algebra Project.[56] His account speaks, as well, to his understanding of the work and his growing sense of himself as an active member of his community.

> I got in the Algebra Project because my little brother was in it—he was always going to a lot of meetings. I was at home watching TV all the time and so my grandmother made me go too. So, I went and I liked what they were doing. They didn't have any spaces but by the time it was ready for summer camp there was space so I went. It is a math literacy program to help middle school kids be eligible to take algebra in middle school so they can advance higher while they are in high school and maybe take college-level math so they can be prepared for college, because my school, they wouldn't let you take algebra in middle school and so kids wouldn't have a chance to take calculus in the high school, and when they go to college, it's like, they wouldn't be prepared and they would have to go home 'cause they would never pass the math course. And that's the way it's been for a long time. But now that we have the Algebra Project, you can take math and advance in math. We take these courses in school but we tutor after school and during the summer. We tutor the whole month of July outside of school at the Family Resource Center because the Algebra Project is also helping to build up the community around our whole area.
>
> In order to tutor we have to go to the leadership training workshop in the summer. We do calculator training, calculus and trig—fractions and equations, we learn this stuff to teach it to someone else. It is mandatory that you will be a tutor after camp. It teaches you how to give back to the community. The Algebra Project pays you to go to camp and then pays you to tutor. They are treating us like interns. We have community meetings and celebrations and we don't charge anything; it's free for people to come and eat and stuff. And a lot of parents and people in the community come and are attending these things. And our superintendent is very supportive. So now that the Algebra Project is having all these activities, it is giving the kids something to do because there [isn't much] to do in Weldon, and that's how a lot of kids get in trouble and stuff. When I came to Weldon in the 7th grade, that was the first year they started letting middle school students study algebra. So after I passed the EOC math test in 7th grade they put me in Algebra I in the 8th grade. And ever since then, I've been taking math courses. Last year when I was a sophomore I took two math courses, I took Algebra II and Advanced Math, so this semester coming up [Junior year] I'll be taking calculus.

Martin Saulsberry, another student, added to the foregoing account:

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[56] The Algebra Project begins from the premise that Algebra is a gateway to higher levels of mathematics and science, that it has often not been available to those who are poor, are seen as different in this society. It is a particularly popular program in many African American communities in the south and southeast.

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> New tutors learn other things besides math. My first class at the leadership training camp was history. They want us to know—this is about leadership, they want us to become leaders in our communities—so they teach us about African leaders, mostly African freedom fighters. Then we go to math classes and then we learn about games—how to trick kids into liking learning, and then we have leadership facilitating and documentary class where we learn how to film what we are doing and then we have writing class. We weren't paid the first year. We did it because we liked it so much.

WORK WITH ENDURING QUALITIES

Work that matters in communities often has lasting qualities. It is memorable. It continues to have an influence long after a particular activity or project is completed. In some respects this idea is related to the development of expertise; once developed, it grows in complexity and versatility and can be applied in new circumstances. Such work also enlarges expectations within schools and communities.

So much of the work we reviewed had these kinds of enduring qualities in the sense that it set patterns for continuing work. Also, we should note that work related to the community, however it came, whether for a few weeks, a semester or a year, was the most memorable work students did. It brought from students high levels of energy and commitment. It brought forward the best work students completed during the year. It generated pride. It attracted considerable community interest. It was seen as contributing something to the place. It was described as work that should be more central to the full curriculum. We provide several descriptions of work that match this understanding.

A teacher from Pollock, South Dakota, for example, described the work going on at the school which involved students deeply in their community. The account which follows is filled with a sense of legacy—providing something enduring.

> We're in our second year of implementation. In our area, there is a housing need. In my Ag department, with shop kids, we are taking in mobile homes, renovating them—thicker two-by-six walls with insulation, redoing everything that needs fixing, new carpeting, ceilings and what not—and selling them back to the community or renting them. We have also started various student-run businesses. One is a video editing business. Students videotape school events and have tapes available for parents to purchase. Students have developed a T-shirt monogram service and with our webserver, students are developing web pages for personal and business use. We are a historic town with a tie to Lewis and Clark and to a relocation by the Corps of Engineers. We have developed a nature trail near the lake. We have also opened a student-run cheese store to replace a cheese store that was closed. To house the student businesses, we recently purchased a building on Main Street. It may also be a place to develop a museum.

Students obviously make contributions to their communities in a variety of ways. One of the ways in which Mariposa middle and high school students are serving as resources is with the Mariposa Creek Parkway Project. The students are working with the Public Works and Recreation Departments to develop a segment of the Parkway. The students are divided into focus groups related to the following topics: history, geology, hydrology, botany, wildlife and multimedia production. They presented their report and recommendations in June 1998 and will help with the enactment of their recommendations during the 1998–1999 school year. The Mariposa Rural Challenge coordinator, Randy Bolt, sees the activity as students' "legacy for their community." How many students are able to say they have made that kind of lasting contribution?

Santa Fe Indian School
Community-Based Education
Math, Science and Technology Program
COCHITI
PUEBLO
PROJECT

The Santa Fe Indian School, which now serves the communities of Cochiti, Santa Clara, Tesuque, San Ildefonso and Jemez in New Mexico, has developed what it calls the Community-Based Education Model—an effort to join with the Pueblos in addressing long-standing environmental and cultural concerns. In the process, students are expected to become environmental scientists, cultural historians and active citizens of their communities. We note one project recently completed in conjunction with the Tesuque Pueblo.

Working with a local environmentalist and the science teacher at the Santa Fe School, twenty-three students from Tesuque conducted biological studies meant to provide baseline data around bird transect studies along the Tesuque River. A major product of the work was a "Biodiversity Manual" to be used to guide ongoing student research. Importantly, as well, students provided the research data needed by the tribe for submission to the Environmental Protection Agency. Again, the work of students can serve multiple purposes—personal growth as serious students of science as well as citizens contributing as community scientists to the preservation of their community.

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CHANGING THE EXPECTATIONS OF SCHOOLS

The work of the Kickapoo River Institute (Wisconsin) also demonstrated a richer quality through its interactions with members of the community, altering in the process the expectations of the school and of students.

A river runs through the curriculum at the Kickapoo River Institute. The river is the catalyst for the integrated lessons offered at this one-year-old charter school—a school which for 100 of the 180 traditional days of instruction was conducted outdoors—a true "school without walls." Woven throughout this non-linear, integrated instructional approach is a real emphasis on place, a focus on the Kickapoo River which geographically defines this valley of southwestern Wisconsin. The complexity of work is apparent in the level of integration that exists in the curriculum, organized around large themes such as: Nature and Society, Biogeography of the Kickapoo Valley, Ecology, Economics and Energy, Technology, Tools, and Thermodynamics, and Healthy People, Healthy Places. (In addition, Spanish instruction through immersion is included.)

While there are no textbooks for most curriculum areas, the river valley provides the context for learning and community members who inhabit that valley are increasingly becoming important "experts" who share their knowledge of the area, its history and way of life with students.

Even as James Lewicki (the teacher-director) facilitates the learning process, much of the specific content of learning is determined by the students themselves. There is an individual educational plan for each student which begins with "gaps in learning" but builds on strengths. The contributions of students are invited and understood as valuable. As students assume responsibility for designing their own learning paths, their motivation increases. As freshman Sandi Schwert asserted, "I don't know how it brings that motivation into a student, but it does....[Before this past year] my main goal in school was to terrorize the teachers and I haven't had to do that this year." Such introspection is encouraged. Indeed, student evaluation is largely done by the students themselves. Their mid-year self-evaluation in December involved writing approximately 1400 words concerning their progress on their determined learning path. In addition, students give two-hour portfolio conferences twice a year in which they present their progress buttressed by samples of their work, to their parents and the larger community. The individual investment of students in their work is high.

> **"If you put kids in the adult world for 100 days, they get good at being adults."**
>
> **JAMES LEWICKI, PROJECT DIRECTOR, KICKAPOO RIVER INSTITUTE**

Though Kickapoo students attend the regular high school for courses in upper-level math, chemistry, and physics, the "standard" curriculum work students engage in is real research—work with real life application. This work involves an organic dimension, moving with the learning. Using primary sources in the archives, for example, students confirmed that the Kickapoo Indians did, indeed, live in the valley. They experienced the excitement of discovery as they sifted through original sources to try to determine the identity of an unknown Civil War soldier by looking for clues in his diary. While studying Haney County, students found that the person after whom the county was named wrote a letter in 1842 which was published in the local paper in which he voiced his dissent against the governmental policy regarding the treatment of Indians. The students took pride in the realization that their area had a history of people standing up for social justice. Further, during a Civil War unit, after a visit to the cemetery, the students found that Kickapoo veterans were at the front of the most honored brigade. They "stumbled upon a gold mine of information" in a Civil War veteran's diary. How better could one instill a deep and genuine sense of pride in place than by making such a discovery and embodying the human connection to the place, its history and heritage?

As a Kickapoo parent noted: "students are reading real and relevant stuff, making connections with diaries, archival material, dusty county court house records while conducting research with real meaning, that has real value. This learning is making a difference."

Three essentials Lewicki feels are instrumental to a productive learning process are work, courtesy and respect. The atmosphere at KRI is one in which all students make contributions of value, tasks such as preparing lunch are shared, and all approaches to inquiry are treated with respect. Lewicki stresses civic responsiveness—"What we do should matter." Indeed, the work these students are involved in matters to those who came before and those who will come after. Arguably, their learning experience transforms them and their community. Lewicki believes that there is "incredible power in a learning community" fostered by the powerful relationships of the students who "refer to themselves as a family."

Sometimes the transformations in expectations come from students. Laura Chevalier, a junior at Wallace, Nebraska and a member of the Community-School Revitalization Project, wrote a paper on rural schools that we have excerpted. It provides a description of her transformation in thought over the course of her secondary schooling. We heard many stories like this.

Rural Schools PAPER BY LAURA CHEVALIER

> Lincoln is a city,
> North Platte is a town,
> Wallace is nothing,
> But a hole in the ground.

> My community and school are so small. The teachers are ancient. I have the same teachers as my parents did when they were my age. They are so personal and know everything about me. I hate it. I never meet new people. I have the same friends I had in pre-school. My classes are terrible. I don't have any choices. It's the same thing everyday. I have to ride the bus to and from school a total of two and a half hours per day. I have to play basketball in a gym smaller than my house. I can't wait until I graduate and move onto college, where I will finally have the opportunity to live life. My town and school will be dead in ten years anyway.

This is just an excerpt from an essay I wrote in junior high. This is the way I felt about my school then. I thought I lived a deprived life with no opportunities. Now, as I read this again, I realize how foolish I really was. Over the years, I have learned to appreciate all the hidden advantages of attending a rural school. Rural schools need to stay in the smaller communities. They should not be forced to close down or consolidate with neighboring schools.

....The school is considered a success if the graduates leave the community to find work or continue their education, for the most part, never to return. Obviously, if this flow of resources is only one way and continues over time, the community dies.

We must now look at the various advantages of rural schools and the impact they have on their community. A survey of small district students was taken by Patricia A. Schmuck, a school district researcher. She asked students to name the best thing about going to a small school. The majority of students interviewed said that they lived to see their friends and participate in extracurricular activities. Another one they were kind of embarrassed to admit was the close relationships they had with teachers and administrators. The smallness offers the possibility of teachers giving individual attention to students and of administrators and teachers developing close family-like ties between them. More than their urban counterparts, small districts have the feasibility of bringing administrators, parents, students, and teachers together in harmony to make school everybody's house.

....Last year, I had the opportunity of a lifetime. I became part of a community/school revitalization team. We attended a course in Chadron and went around to communities and schools in the area to discover new, inventive ways to improve our own community and school. Through this year long experience, I gained a lot of pride in my school. Before I went through this, I hated going to a small school, as I wrote in my essay before. However, this organization helped me gain a deeper understanding of how advantageous living in a small town can be. I increased my respect, not only for my own rural school, but for rural schools all around the world. It helped me see how big of a role I play in my school and community. I wish that everyone here today could have gone through this program. Then you would see how vital rural schools really are.

This is how I would word my essay today:

> My community and school are small. I have the same teachers my parents had. I have the same friends I had in pre-school. I LOVE IT!!!

TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS

We close this section by describing the work of two school administrators who are also helping create a transformation in their schools and who are altering the circumstances which surround teaching and learning and the place of the community.

LYDIA HARDING-ELDER, PRINCIPAL, WELDON MIDDLE SCHOOL (ALGEBRA PROJECT SITE)

Weldon is located in Halifax County near Roanoke Rapids and Halifax, North Carolina. The economy is farming—corn, peanuts, soybeans and the primary occupations are farming and housecleaning. There are two middle schools and one high school located half way between Raleigh and Virginia Beach.

Harding-Elder sponsors the Algebra Project in her school because of its emphasis on enlisting parents and other community members in making the project work. "The parents had lost trust in the school, they weren't coming to PTSA meetings or parent teacher conferences. When I came to the middle school as an Assistant Principal we had an average of 9 parents coming to PTSA meetings." Weldon implemented the demand that her entire staff make home visits to each of their students four times a year. "This year we had a full house at PTSA with between 100 to 150 parents."

The Algebra Project is more than just getting kids through Algebra 1 and 2—a way of ensuring them access to higher level math courses and higher SAT courses. Harding-Elder has linked this goal to the goal of getting parents to confront a variety of issues in their lives—specifically the lack of education which would qualify them for better jobs. Today the parents have taken over a building that used to be a high school before integration as their new family resource center. Parents come in to work on their GEDs, they run a clothes closet for children's clothes, they hold meetings and sometimes weddings; and the building also serves as a place for staff development workshops for teachers.

"We are trying to empower parents to take part in their community and train students and empower them so that when they go off and get their college degree they will come back and feel comfortable in making a contribution. Right now we have a major shortage of teachers. When the teachers come they only stay for one or two years because they are from out there, everywhere. They don't stay; they have no connectedness. I require the teachers to make home visits; I am a principal who promotes parental involvement and I push that."

Harding-Elder has also encouraged a school-wide program where her middle school students tutor other students in areas in which they decide they need help. The students tutor in math and reading Tuesday and Thursday 3:15 to 4:15 in the school and at the community center on Saturday.

"After every tutoring session they have to reflect and they have to do that in a large group, verbally and written, what they could have done to make the tutoring session better and what are some things other students need to watch out for. The students get paid; when they don't work, they don't get paid. They have to send in their time sheets and they determine who will work with whom, which students will tutor whom, and they have to go out and get the materials from the teachers. So they totally run the program."

The students use cooperative learning to tutor which has pushed their teachers to introduce cooperative learning in the regular classroom.

"Last school term, when you came into Weldon Middle School, you would never see seats in a row. Students are in groups and they are working together, helping each other. With the instruction in the classroom, I use the students to move the teachers. The goal is to get students enrolled in Algebra 1 at least by 9th grade. In the state of North Carolina all students have to take Algebra 1 and they have to pass it. A lot of students are struggling; they have to take it 2 or 3 years."

Harding-Elder sets high demands for her students and her staff. The type of pedagogy she is pushing is both demanding as well as different from what teachers have been used to. As compensation, she structures the day to allow each of her teachers the individual planning time that they need to achieve their goals.

The results for both staff and students have been very positive, so much so that when Harding-Elder's students graduate to the 9th grade, they have certain expectations about classroom learning and taking responsibility. What happens when her students go to the high school?

"The principal of the high school is going to call me up and say that there is something wrong with those children, we can't get them to do a darn thing. OK, let me tell you how they learn best. Have your teachers come down and meet with my 8th grade teachers. That is what is going to have to happen because she is not going to listen until it is right at her door and she doesn't know what to do. Because of the kids that they got last year, it hit them a little bit, but the bang wasn't hard enough and when this next group goes through, it is going to be like a hurricane."

Harding-Elder's strongest motivation is giving her children options which is why she is so committed to the Rural Challenge and the Algebra Project philosophy. She wants to show children that they can be successful by graduating, going on to college, AND returning to live in Weldon. She pushes her teachers to think and teach in different ways; she pushes her students to learn in different ways. She trusts that there are ways to integrate community learning into the day to day classroom activities and she provides adequate planning time for teachers to do so. She is as interested in making sure the children are "where they need to be at the end of the year," as she is in encouraging parents to reinvest in their own education. "When you have these programs you have to be a risk-taker, and I am a risk-taker because I believe it will work."

JEANNE SURFACE, PRINCIPAL, WAKEFIELD SCHOOL, NEBRASKA (SCHOOL AT THE CENTER SITE)

Wakefield, Nebraska is a town of 1000 people in the northeastern part of the state. Most of the residents are of Swedish descent. For centuries farming and agriculture have been the sole economy, but in the past several decades an egg production plant has supplanted farming as a major employer. Increasingly, the employees in the egg business are Mexican, Vietnamese and Cambodian immigrants who have begun to diversify this homogeneous community.

Jeanne Surface is the elementary and high school principal (total of 413 students), and a catalyst within and without the school. Originally from Hastings, Nebraska, Surface is a relative newcomer to Wakefield. Nonetheless, she has quickly become part of the social fabric of the town, attending the Lutheran church and acting in the community theatre.

As a leader, Surface stays up with current educational research and interacts with her colleagues across the state and the nation. She is passionate about school reform, and believes that rural schools are good schools which would be better if they could break down the isolation and experiment with less traditional pedagogy. She makes sure her staff has the same opportunities to interact with their peers in other states.

"My perception is I think our kids are fairly confident. I think that it comes by coming through a system where their thoughts and ideas are important and they are supported in their education and they are not in an environment that is degrading to them. That is something I feel very strongly about."

"I would like to see us get more into community-based science. The Rural Challenge and School at the Center are supporting the purchase of a science program in the elementary school that will allow for getting out in the community and doing things."

In 1997, supported by funds from School at the Center, Surface designated two weeks in January as the start of their new Wakefield Institute. They chose the theme, "the 1930s," and each teacher organized a new, experiential activity that focused on the 1930s and supplanted the regular curriculum. The teachers came up with activities such as quilting, a video of what life was like in the 1930s, a Wakefield version of monopoly with actual town sites as part of the game, a musical celebration, and an art show. One teacher and her students collaborated with town business people to do a market analysis and look for needs that weren't being met. The students eventually came up with a business plan to open a Bed and Breakfast, which subsequently won a statewide competition.

The 1998 Wakefield Institute celebrated family and place. Surface learned from the previous year that the teachers wanted to devote the entire day during the Institute to the activities, instead of teaching regular classes half day. The teachers and students responded enthusiastically to the change; attendance went up to 95 percent for the week and more projects were included.

The long-term goal of the Institute is to move the school and curriculum in a direction that is highly sensitive to the needs of the community and change the culture of instruction. One of the most significant ways that students develop an identity is by learning about their place, their roots, and their heritage. After two years of the Institute, teachers really got the fact that learning does not have to come out of a textbook. She wants to tie the short-term Institute units to long-term curriculum units and introduce them at the beginning of the year.

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A Word About Assessment

Before we move on to Mutuality, and as we complete this section on Student Work, we should offer a perspective about assessment. At the moment, with considerable support from state departments of education and legislative bodies, assessment in and of schools—the assessment that has come to matter—has been reduced to various norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests.[57] Yet, we met teachers across the Rural Challenge who want to get closer to their students, have more access to what they can actually do, and see their learning over time. They are increasingly attracted to portfolio assessment and exhibitions of performance.[58] They are trying to engage their students in genuine work.

If teachers were doing only the typical work of schools, the textbook curriculum and the test curriculum, not choosing to engage their local settings, build more of the curriculum around place, see the need to pursue more work in depth through extended projects or alter their basic pedagogies to include more student choice and greater use of community members as teachers, these various tests might seem reasonable enough, even if limited in their capacity for getting very close to students'

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[57] We acknowledge that such testing is not equally potent across the states encompassing Rural Challenge sites, that assessment has, in some settings, Vermont being the best example, multiple forms, including enlarging uses of portfolios and more public exhibitions. We worry, though, that even in settings in which the testing is not of the high stakes variety and there has been a long history of more locally organized assessment, testing will assume in the years ahead greater potency—becoming more of a universal marker of quality.

[58] *Student portfolios* are essentially collections of student work over time. They typically provide selections of what students/teachers consider typical work, challenging work, representations of particular skills. They often provide several stages of projects—from conception to drafts to a completed project. They generally include, as well, considerable student self-evaluation. Exhibitions are opportunities for students to present their work to other students and adults. They are public demonstrations of what they understand and are able to do.

learning. But as teachers alter their approaches to teaching, seeing their purposes differently, moving on to ever higher standards for student work, the various tests seem too insensitive, too limited, too constraining. They suggest, as well, too little genuine accountability.

What we viewed in great abundance over the year was student work that had a public quality. It was presented to others in and outside of schools. Teachers believed the public quality made a qualitative difference in the work of their students. Students concurred with such a view. Based on what we examined, we would also concur.

As students engaged in community-based work, for which they had to construct an increasing array of the content, students had to write more, present data in more visually understandable forms, solve genuine problems and enlarge various skills that they learned were valued by adults in their communities. We met students who described how much more involved they were with their education as they pursued projects that had meaning in their settings. They spoke of work that "was memorable."

> **"Knowing the work was going to be in a public place, the students put much more than usual into the work."**
>
> **DEBORAH ANN LEMASTER, TEACHER, SALYERSVILLE, KENTUCKY**

We also learned this year that in settings in which students were engaged in work they cared about, in relation to questions that mattered to them, that moved them to higher levels of expertise, they could speak with considerable authority about how they were doing, whether their work was at a beginning stage or quite far along. They were increasingly engaged in sophisticated self-assessment. This is a desirable state. We remember so well Keith King, a student from Clear Lake, South Dakota, who presented his website work so articulately, and then described his learning path, what he had learned, how he altered things when something didn't work out, what he didn't yet know how to do well enough and how he was proceeding to enlarge his learning. Further, and we view this as particularly significant, as students were displaying their work publicly, community people were able to see what the students were doing.[59] By and large, community members came away from these public exhibitions impressed with the quality of student work.

We devoted considerable effort over the course of the past year to student work, wanting to get closer to it, examining what was typical and what was challenging. Some of our directions might be illuminating, not only as a means of describing some of our processes but also the kinds of questions we view as important.

We asked our Research Associates, who spend from 15 to 24 days each year in their respective focus sites, to observe in classrooms and engage students and teachers about the nature of ongoing student work. We provided some of the following questions to guide the observations and interviews:

- Are students engaged?
- Are they becoming serious readers and writers?
- Are they becoming more confident about themselves as learners?
- Are instructional practices leading to students becoming more active, developing inquiry skills, using technologies to extend learning?

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[59] The public exhibitions were large in many of the sites. A unique process exists in Peacham, Vermont where children present their portfolios to community people at the public library.

- What can be said about the traditional expectations—reading, writing, dispositions toward inquiry, constructive uses of resources, independence, problem solving?
- Are students becoming more involved academically and in civic terms with their communities—their histories, arts, cultural roots, flora and fauna, economic structures, politics, potential future, etc.?

Their reports were filled with accounts of student work, samples of student work and transcriptions of interviews. In addition, from six to twelve teachers in each of the nine focus sites maintained student portfolios which included typical work, project work, challenging work. These portfolios were then reviewed.

Further, in preparation for our regional Research and Evaluation Convocations, held at Boiling Springs, North Carolina, Granby, Colorado and Cannon Beach, Oregon, we made clear to participants (who were scheduled to come from *all* Rural Challenge sites) our interest in student work and asked that samples of student work be brought to the convocations.

At the convocations, we entered into a process of collaborative review of student work that has become fairly typical in settings that make heavy use of portfolios. After organizing tables with the student work alongside the teachers who were involved with the work, and small groups of our teachers, students, and community people, the following protocol was used to guide the review.

PROTOCOL FOR STUDENT WORK

1. Look at the work.
   In this preliminary period, there is no conversation. Everyone looks carefully at the work, getting a sense of its shape, the content, the questions guiding it, how it was done, the presentation.
2. Describe the work.
   Each person viewing the work describes the work. What each sees. What stands out for each viewer.
3. Response of person close to the work.
   This person describes the work, how it was created, how it was evaluated.
   The person presenting also comments on the motivations, purposes, and decisions made along the way.

After descriptions, observers ask questions about the work and the description of the work.

4. The following questions guide the next segment of discussions.
   What does the work tell us about the student/students?
   What does it tell us about the classroom/school?
   What does the work tell us about the community?

We then moved to whole group conversation.

5. The following questions are directed to everyone involved in the review of student work.
   What would cause you to say the work is challenging? Of high quality?
   What is the evidence of schools and community being connected?
   What does the work suggest about the instructional program?
   What content is most represented?

All of the work and related discussions at these Regional Research and Evaluation Convocations were recorded by both video- and audiotape. These were all subjected to a focused review by our research staff.

In addition to these focused reviews of student work, we also engaged in small focus groups with teachers, parents and community people to discuss student work and schools and communities growing together. We present part of the protocol below:

1. Describe the Rural Challenge work in your school/community:
    a. What are the themes, community issues?
    b. What content areas are represented?
    c. What technical and technological skills are being developed?
    d. What is the ratio of time inside/outside the classroom?
    e. What grade level(s), special constituencies are involved (e.g. high-risk students)?
    f. How long do the projects run?
    g. What is the community involvement?
    h. Who controls the curriculum development: teacher, students, community people?
2. What would cause you to say things are getting better academically in this school/classroom? (e.g. What was is it like before? Level of student engagement, attendance patterns, increase in collaborations among classes, etc.)
    a. What would cause you to say kids are becoming better readers, writers, posers of questions in mathematics, science, history, local citizens?
    b. What kinds of things have students become more interested in learning about?
    c. What causes you to say the work is getting better? How do you assess student learning?

All of the focused conversations were audiotaped for later transcription, coded against the themes which became the organizational structure of this report.

Overall, the discussions about student work were rich. Discussions of quality were always embedded in a context. Work seen as good was understood to be rooted in a place, connections could be made to other learning, there was a voice or person visible, complexity was manifest, it was clear that students were gaining a sense of expertise, higher levels of understanding, and the work mattered to the students and to the community. In these terms, the work we viewed this year was of much higher quality than what we reviewed a year ago.

How did teachers, students and community people describe work they understood to be of high quality? And what were the qualities they saw in the work that caused them to believe the work was of high quality?

> *When it matters to the community, in this sense is genuine work, it tends to be of higher quality, distinguishable from routine school work.*
>
> COMMUNITY MEMBER

> *Work that matters tends to be complex—complexity is related to academic challenge.*
>
> TEACHER

> *Invention is often seen—surprising the teacher and other students. The work goes in fresh directions, in the process raising standards.*
>
> SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

When students select the topic, idea or issue, it tends to be fuller, aided by a large personal dimension.
Rural Challenge Research Associate

It is clear that teachers and students are really involved in the work [but I can't imagine such work in my school].

The teacher from the particular setting responded:

It took a while to get to this level. But our expectations grew with each project.
Exchange of two teachers at the Southeast Regional Convocation

It is challenging work. It seems to grow out of a real question that is important.
Teacher

I know it is work I'll remember long after all the tests.
Student describing her own work being reviewed

The fact that it works around two languages (Yup'ik and English) makes it more complex and higher in quality.
Teacher

It is whole. The work tells a story in and of itself.
Teacher

It is not fragmented.
Community person

It doesn't have a template. It is clear that the students have worked out the issues.
Teacher

If the work strikes something inside of me, brings an emotional response, it is quality work. What I have been viewing does that. Most work I see in schools doesn't do that.
Teacher

When kids say, "the work is so good that I want to bring it to my grandmother," you know it's high quality work.
Teacher

It is generative—not only for the people who were engaged in it but also for the people looking. It blows the top off Bloom's taxonomy.
Project administrator

You can tell that a lot went into this work, that it mattered.
Student

Our intent was to have a series of discussions about "high quality work." And we have reported in this section on student work the areas that were central in these discussions. It is our way of helping move this conversation forward in the Rural Challenge, providing us an inductively produced guide around which to assess the deepening of the work, which will be the subject of our large report for 1999.[40]

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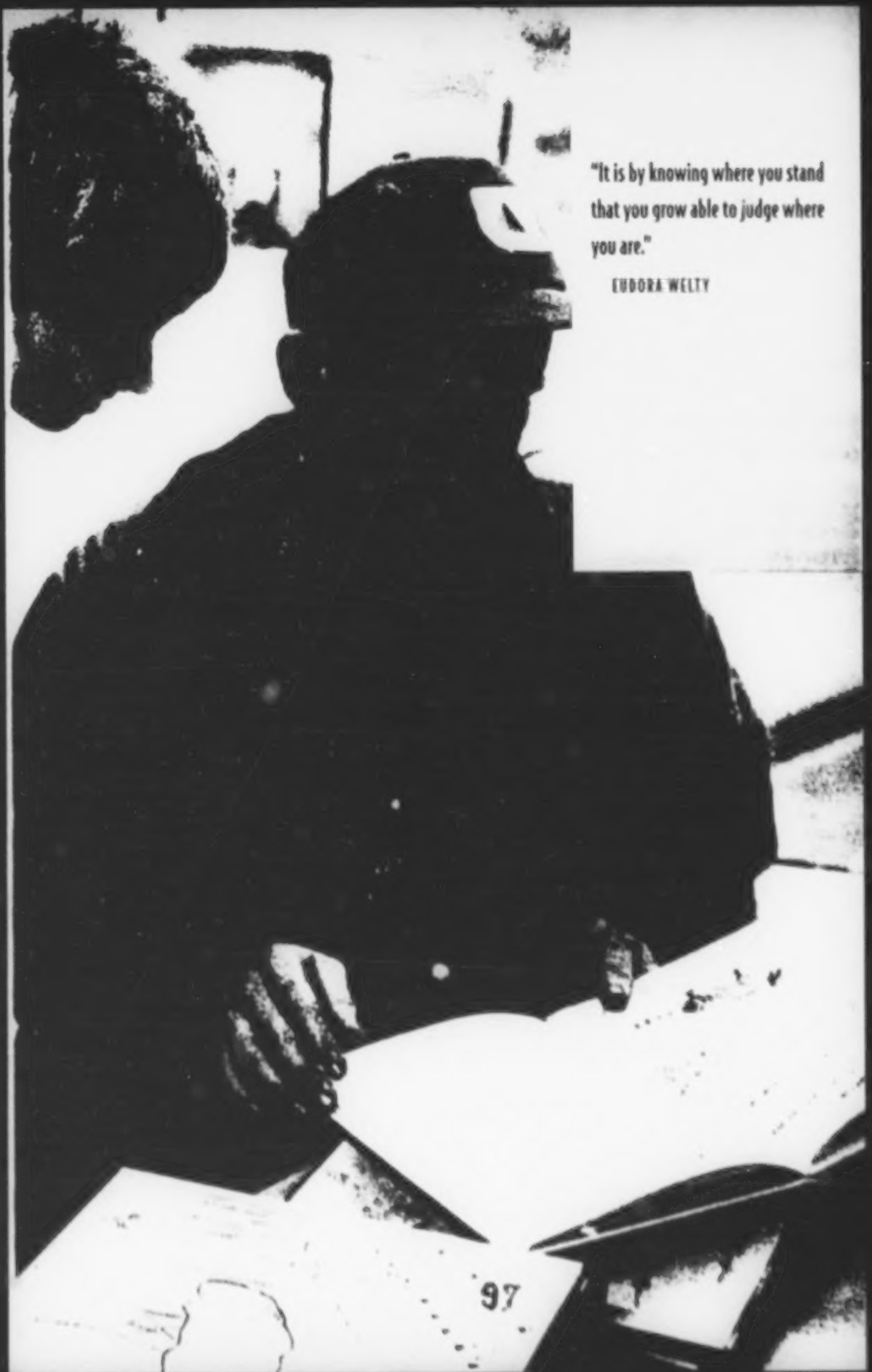
[40] It is our intention during the year to complete with the Project Directors a booklet on Assessment that provides a guide to the literature around authentic assessment as well as examples of constructive assessment practices in various Rural Challenge sites.



"It is by knowing where you stand that you grow able to judge where you are."

EUDORA WELTY

Living and Learning in Rural Schools and Communities: Mutuality

A central concern of Rural Challenge work is the sustainability of rural communities, a concern for enriching the quality of life for those who currently live in these communities and for those who will inhabit them in the future. We have discussed extensively the philosophy and practices of a place-centered pedagogy as a necessary but not sufficient step toward this enrichment. The lasting impact of the curricular and pedagogical work of place occurring around schooling is predicated on the interconnection that students, schools and communities establish through the work of particular people in particular places. In its deepest and most enduring quality, this work is fully collaborative and provides mutual benefit to multiple sectors and layers of community life. In this section of the report we describe, through the words and writings of Rural Challenge participants, the ways divergent groups in Rural Challenge communities are coming together around common goals and actions in order to enhance the quality of life within their towns and villages and reclaim the local place in the imaginations and future plans of their children and young people. We document a wide variety of initiatives that sites have undertaken and the interconnectedness these efforts have fostered between schools and community life, as well as people of all ages and backgrounds. We frame the exchange in terms of *mutuality* rather than reciprocity, the term we used in our November 1997 report, in large measure because mutuality seems now the better formulation, a recognition of the deeper integration that is occurring in many Rural Challenge sites. In addition, we should note that our discussion of mutual benefits could have been integrated into the framework we established around student work. In fact, we refer here to some of the same projects to make the larger connection to mutuality. It seems clear to us that good student work around place leads to greater mutuality, the whole, in this regard, becoming inevitably larger than the sum of its parts. In the Rural Challenge this matters.

COMMON PURPOSES

Pride of place and recognition of the precious resources that come from small, close-knit communities with common goals and histories stand alongside concerns of imminent loss as rural community members watch their youth—too often unaware of the knowledge, talents and offerings of their community elders—being enticed away by goods and opportunities in larger cities. There is also concern among people in many settings about the viability of their towns and villages as they face problems of poverty, isolation, and lack of employment options which not only push young people away but adversely affect the lives of those who remain.

"In Search of a Fading Culture" is the title of an extended 5th–6th grade curriculum in Cordia, Kentucky.

The larger Rural Challenge goal of building stronger communities through greater interaction around common, local concerns is seen as an important step towards counteracting the circumstances that threaten rural sites with images of becoming another Esmond, South Dakota. Bringing various groups together around school initiatives and extending school activities beyond the boundaries of the school building and the textbook are helping to create a seamless web of community life engaged in restoring, reconstructing, and generating a deeper sense of community—of people connected to each other in activity and caring relationships. In the following comment made by Tonie Hilligoss, from the Yuba Watershed Alliance (California), the interconnectedness of all aspects of the community and its institutions and the pressure of economic, political and social forces undermining community viability are intertwined as they are in so many of the Rural Challenge sites:

> We are committed to the idea of school and community being one. Everything that affects our kids needs to be seen as a school issue and a community issue. Even though economic development is not generally considered part of education, if we lose our kids, and we've lost half of ours in eight years, because there aren't any jobs, then that affects our whole education system. Our school is in fiscal jeopardy because we have lost student population. We've had to lay off a teacher and all our aides. Health is another concern. We have lost funding because our average daily attendance dropped with a lice problem. We put in place an incredible lice prevention program. We know health issues matter. And we got a large county social services grant to provide services to families who were struggling—making it difficult for their children to learn. We have counselors going out to houses and it is making a huge difference. We are running anger prevention programs to help deal with domestic violence in some of our homes.

Flambeau, a rural district in Rusk County, in North Central Wisconsin, that serves five different communities and has two small elementary schools and a junior/senior high school, with a population of 114, is in the poorest county in the state, and has come to see the need to connect all its citizens in active community work. In 1994, a group of concerned Flambeau citizens, with a conventional rural resource-based economy in dairy farming and logging, faced with a continuing economic decline in commodities, realized that its community was slowly dying. They began convening hundreds of focus groups consisting of a broad range of community members, including teachers, administrators and students from the schools. The focus groups clarified the need to join forces across the community

and especially targeted the schools to address specifically the role of education in the survival of the community. The focus groups looked for ways to increase employment and to encourage stronger investment in the local community—essentially how to become both individual entrepreneurs in their own businesses and also collective entrepreneurs of their own place.

The first focus group conversations in Flambeau sparked a school-community arrangement to produce a sesquicentennial festival for the area. The Flambeau Festival committee, consisting of community members and students, applied to the Wisconsin Sesquicentennial Commission for financial assistance, and was awarded a $21,000 grant to sponsor events July 3–5, 1998 in Tony and Ladysmith, Wisconsin.

The students began the first stage of the project by interviewing local individuals, owners of local businesses, church leaders and community groups about their interests and historical understandings. Artists started a process of recruiting people to design and produce community murals, and writers enlisted people to edit and publish an interpretive history of the two towns. Twenty-two students from Flambeau school sought apprenticeships with the Folk Life Center at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and during the 1997/98 school year worked one on one (via email) with their Smithsonian mentors learning the craft of producing folk festivals. In June 1998, the students traveled to Washington to work directly alongside their mentors to produce the annual Smithsonian Folk Life Festival which featured the state of Wisconsin. In July, everything came together with three days of activities including an old fashioned fair, town parade, a school reunion, a lumberjack exhibition, a rendezvous with a Native American pow-wow, and an exhibit of artifacts in the town hall.

Much of the work that creates community is tied to issues facing various towns, ranging from economic concerns to public services that need to be offered. Once the value of students as contributors to the common good is recognized, the opportunities for community initiatives multiply as this story from Julesburg, Colorado (Stewards of the High Plains), told by Betty Moellenberg, demonstrates:

Julesburg was having some difficulties getting off the ground. In fact, it looked as if they would drop out of our cluster. I started talking about the Rural Challenge program with the principal and the superintendent who got so excited about the possibilities that they decided to stay with the cluster, and have begun some really good work. For instance, some of their students painted a mural in the cafeteria depicting the whole history of Julesburg. They gathered information, planned the arrangement and chose the colors. Also, they studied the emotional issue of large corporate farming, which could bring in a new kind of laborer, cause possibilities of air, soil and water pollution....Students researched this economic issue, went to Washington, DC to talk with the senators and representatives from Colorado and to find out more about the larger issues. They reported back to the local organizations. In addition, they have hired students to do many service-oriented programs; one as a reader and a courier to the local library who will read to the younger kids that don't get home reading, and will bring older people without transportation to the library. Others designed, purchased plants and built landscaping for the new assisted living home which is three or four blocks from the school, which they will maintain through Rural Challenge funding. Another works as a computer lab assistant allowing community members to come in the evenings for classes and information gathering with possibilities of a job or career. While much of the work is still between the administrator and a few students, we assume it will now begin to be more a part of the regular classroom and curricula.

Both Idalia and Julesburg are working on melodramas based on the history of their area. Julesburg has an old building called the Hippodrome which is a gas lit theater that they have revived and they will do their melodrama there. In an area removed from professional performances, both students and community members can interact to provide entertainment. They are doing a Plains Indian workshop...and they also have a river walk project where they are identifying on plaques along the river different plants and their uses with animals and people.

At both Fleming and Idalia, greenhouses are being started with an eye to starting small businesses for their areas—providing fish and fresh produce, as well as horticultural classes to their communities and students. Idalia will extend the Rural Challenge program in the greenhouse and nature center to include at least seven disciplines and five daily classes, penetrating deeper into the curricula of the entire school, K–12.

"Fleming (Stewards of the High Plains, Colorado) has a grant that gives them the money to build a circular bicycle and pedestrian route for walkers, baby strollers, skateboarders and all kinds of things. It runs from downtown and runs through the school, a park area and a residential area, so the whole community can use this. They also have a program where students work out in the field with community members in banks, laundries and all kinds of businesses in town. They have a community wellness program that the Future Business Leaders of America work on and they give a nutrition class and classes on exercise and fitness, nutritional needs, daily living skills, stress reduction. The math class, vocational ag. classes and the town administrators are joining students to use interdisciplinary studies to build a baseball field."

Students engaging in this kind of work offer a real contribution to the life and livelihood of their towns which, in turn, makes them feel valued and proud. An Albemarle participant recounted:

> We have a two-county pilot and got some money for laptop computers for middle school kids. We had them survey the community for the challenges that the community faced and then had them work on teams with community members to talk about what were possible solutions. Then they explored information on the Internet and ended with a multimedia presentation to the community about what they learned....One of the best things was a letter from a planner in Hyde County that went to the students at the Middle School and it essentially said that Hyde County was such a small county that it did not have the resources to do the research that the students did for them, and without the research that the students did, they would not have had this plan for recreation for the entire county, for the senior citizens and young kids. The kids thought that was just great that she acknowledged them. I think it can change the perceptions of a lot of people and did in that case.

As the example of researching the economic impact of hog farming in Julesburg illustrates, coming together to address a local problem tends to carry the work into ever more complex and public arenas. A story from New Paradigm Partners also demonstrates this:

> The City Forest Paper Company is under new management and they have a very different business style. Chuck [Ericksen] brought kids to see the plant and find out more about the business. When they were there, the plant manager talked about the waste they were landfilling. They had put the disposal of the waste on the back burner because they never had time to deal with it. The chemistry teacher and his students collected samples of the waste and took it back to class to break down and analyze. They found out the waste could be separated, that it was non-toxic and they could separate out the clay. The biology teacher also got involved in trying to figure out uses for the clay. Could it be used to make pottery? Someone found out that the turkey farm nearby used clay as a feed binder for turkey food. The students brokered a two-business exchange between the paper company and the turkey farm. Ericksen asked the question: How many more businesses have back-burnered projects for lack of time and expertise that might be turned over to the school?

Howard, South Dakota provides a good example of a site in which the work around place is becoming well integrated into the life of the entire school and the community. In 1995, place-based learning was a fairly novel concept at Howard High School. Initial attempts to incorporate local place into the existing curriculum were made by two veteran teachers. Mary Stangohr designed an English and Journalism unit that centered on the book, *Broken Heartland*, a narrative that resonated well with the farm crisis experience as her students and their families lived it in South Dakota. Understanding the fiscal ramifications of the farm crisis on the survival of rural towns such as Howard, teacher Randy Parry developed an economic unit with his Future Business Leaders of America students. This learning collaboration involved both the students and the community in looking at the implications of spending money locally versus non-locally.

The success of these initial place-centered endeavors created an important educational experience for students and the larger community, an enthusiasm and expectation for this type of community-school interaction, thus helping to ensure that this sort of work will continue. The length of time devoted to Stangohr's unit, the depth of student project work, and the number of complementary interdisciplinary learning experiences around *Broken Heartland* has expanded each year. Parry's initial economic survey provided the impetus for ongoing Community Vision Meetings—meetings which have increased citizen awareness of their common issues and challenges but also their collective ability to influence change and contribute to the possibility of economic survival for the place they call home—Miner County, South Dakota.

Choices

Drawing by Josh Kofford, Howard, South Dakota.

A farmer does his chores early this morning.
The construction men are coming to mark his land.
He has fought for his right to put up these buildings.
With hopes of more money at hand.
People will talk and not all agree.
Who is looking out for his future?
Can we say what should be?
It is his choice to change that pasture.
But, is he looking out for the community?
Time will tell the truth in the end.
Can he survive while on others he mostly depends?
All we do is watch and hope for the best.
While these confinements are put to the test.
Judging the future is no easy task,
So will we even be here tomorrow might be the question to ask.

Currently, a relatively new teacher at the school, is collaboratively designing an interdisciplinary curriculum which engages virtually all high school students, approximately 80 percent of the high school faculty, and a significant number of Miner County residents, in the study of the incidence of cancer in and around their local region—a learning activity that has direct relevance to their lives. As a result of the increasing incorporation of place-based study into the curriculum at Howard, lessons have become more interdisciplinary. Students are teaching each other and people in the community. There is a higher level of expectation, among students and those in the community, that learning will be relevant. In addition, the radius of the learning and its impact is widening.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLING

Those attending the Rural Challenge gatherings appeared to display rich understandings of how important it is to change the way rural schools function, to consider ways of making the schools more connected to the community, and to see community members as important resources in schools. Valuing the local area physically, culturally, and socially is taking root in all sites through a pedagogy of place that is being constructed around local history, values and problems.[41] This work takes on various forms across the sites. Ginny Jaramillo, project director, Colorado Charter School Network, notes the ways the schools engage community members:

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[41] As we noted earlier, there is movement everywhere, even as the range and depth of development varies greatly from site to site.

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> We have a lot of mentorship programs which have grown because charter schools are not required to have certified teachers. We are now able to pay some stipends to community people who work in the schools. Lake George and Guffie originally did not have art or music programs. Now we have art, music, journalism. We have PE taught by a person who does rock climbing which is what people do in our area. A football team wouldn't make any sense. We also do cross country skiing in the winter. Anyone in the community who thinks they have a talent they could share, they write a simple proposal. We have had everything from Kung Fu to Sign Language. We tried a lot of things to see what things really motivated kids....The school at Marble is actually in a historic building which was once a museum. Some of the older people said they didn't want it to be a school, they wanted the museum, so the school kids are creating a museum. It started out with a former administrator, but now two new guys have come to the community and are doing a great job of pulling things together. The museum is a local history museum and they are training the kids as docents.

COMMUNITY PEOPLE AS TEACHERS

"Groups in the community now call the school to share what they are doing and invite school people to join."

ANN SLATTERY, COORDINATOR, NORTH COAST RURAL CHALLENGE, PT. ARENA, CALIFORNIA

Alaska communities are sponsoring cultural camps for students and teachers. In these settings, Native elders are the experts. Foresters and research scientists have become regular participants in work with teachers and students in several sites. A working farm will be the base for classroom studies in Albemarle, North Carolina. Everything from historical to math and scientific studies will be conducted at the farm.

Community consultants are working with teachers in many school settings to develop appropriate curriculum. Senior citizens are being encouraged to work in some schools as teaching resources. In Wisconsin, they can receive a local tax credit for the time they devote to the school and the students. A program in Tillamook involves elementary children who wish to have a "lunch buddy"—an adult in the community who comes to lunch once a week and engages in conversation, plays a game, responds to questions. About 90 adults, who underwent a background check and then received some training, are now involved. The program is growing in popularity. It is seen as a good way to get community people comfortable in the school and has contributed to good press for the schools and their community partners. In Appalachia they "make use of large numbers of community people—foresters, farmers, local story tellers, artists, herbalists, persons who know how to make jelly, do craft work distinctive to our place. We find people to match almost everything we are studying....As we have reached out, the community has responded. People love having the opportunity to share things they know with younger people."

> "So much of what students learn about wetlands comes from textbooks or the Internet. We'll put on our boots and go down to the marsh and walk around in the wetland and see what's going on there."
>
> BOB HARRELL, CO-DIRECTOR,
> ALBEMARLE RECREATION CENTER, ALBEMARLE, NORTH CAROLINA

In Stanton Elementary, a small school located on the western edge of the Cumberland Plateau in eastern Kentucky, a participant reported, "one out of every four students receives individualized instruction in some kind of bluegrass instrument—fiddle, banjo, bass—by people in the community and an eleven-member student bluegrass band is traveling around the county to play. It is a sight to see. They pack it wherever they go." Faye King, the Principal of Stanton, notes with obvious pride and enthusiasm:

> Our music program taps into thriving, energetic organizations such as Powell County's "Friends of the Bluegrass," which boasts a 700 membership team. Members of this organization work with students weekly on musical improvisational structure through stringed instruments customarily utilized in the art form. Because the community has embraced our study of bluegrass, individualized student instruction is as available as "soda pop."
>
> The school's musical performance group, composed of students aged five through twelve is known as The Wise Village Pickers and Singers and was named for the beloved bluegrass fiddler, Chubby Wise. Our standard of student performance and musical scholarship has attracted broad-based popularity. Our students have performed at national education conferences, the International Bluegrass Music Association Awards Show, and the retirement gala for the CEO of United Parcel Service, Mr. Oz Nelson.

> The Wise Village reputation with seasoned bluegrass artists led to the bluegrass community's engagement of public policy issues prompting the Kentucky Department of Education to add bluegrass, an indigenous Kentucky art form, to the genres being assessed at all school accountability levels in Kentucky. Our school collaborated with the International Bluegrass Music Association to produce its annual conference in Louisville, Kentucky, entitled "Bluegrass in the Schools." The culminating workshop for Kentucky teachers at this conference was presented by the Wise Village students.
>
> The study of music at our school is multidisciplinary. All students in the school study the origin of bluegrass music including the influence of blues on traditional Scotch Irish music and the people surrounding the rise of this improvisational art form. The relationship between blues, jazz, and bluegrass is explored.
>
> The fundamental shift from curriculum development which solicits community engagement to one which stitches the curriculum to the community interest has extended to all areas of study. The place connected curriculum has an emotional tie that makes serious scholarship culturally reasonable and respected. Therefore, student achievement is genuinely celebrated and applauded by the community that helped create the studies.
>
> The philosophy undergirding the curriculum is transformational, culturally sensitive, and inclusive. Our Wise Village initiative assumes that all parents and community resources can become teachers and that school is not an institution but a nurturing state of mind. The common sense and expertise in specific areas, not credentials, make our Wise Village participants the equal of traditional institutions. The adults and older children from our community, in the natural order of things within our school, make learning relevant and real to young students.

Entrepreneurial apprenticeships are another way that community members serve as teachers and mentors for students. A Hillsborough, North Carolina REAL (Rural Entrepreneurship Through Action Learning) facilitator tells of beginning this work in his community:

> We explore opportunities in the community to try to find ways for students to start their own businesses. We want them to make money in the community they live in without having to move or commute….At the beginning of the school year [I] develop a community support team. This team brings people from outside the school system into the schools to let the students meet people in the community who are successful and prominent and who are to be mentors and guide them in research about owning and operating a business. Our end goal would be to identify potential business opportunities for our students. We may have six or eight people on our community support team and we may bring in four or five more that are not on the team as guest speakers, to send students out to the work place or to visit these people in their businesses or their jobs.

Through the REAL program in Hillsborough, North Carolina, Brian Blalock, for example, was introduced to welding and spent a full year, six to eight hours a week, of high school apprenticing to a local welder. As part of his classroom-based work with REAL, he developed a business plan and used part of his school time to build a trailer, making his welding shop portable and mobile, allowing him to transport all of his welding equipment with his car.

Brian was awarded a $1000 scholarship from the REAL scholarship committee to start his own business, which he did last year. At the time of this report, Brian had a business card, two steady customers, and was well on his way to stepping into the shoes of the town's only welder who is retiring.

A growing initiative in the North Coast Rural Challenge in California makes connections to local community interests that provide constructive opportunities to students:

> We had a town meeting a year ago and we invited people from every community organization we could think of. And we broke into groups and asked them to generate what they felt the community's needs were. And then we started a conversation about how the school could help with the community's needs. We got from this lists of people who were interested in working with our students on community-oriented projects. Out of this we developed a class at the school to support a kind of internship with a community project. It wasn't well defined at the beginning but we have really beefed it up since then. Last year there were fifty kids signed up to work in the various community projects. With the new community service requirement at the high school, we expect to see many more students in the coming year. It has been a great thing to see so many people in the community get involved with our students. Many of our students have ended up with paying jobs as a result of their internships.

"Our Twilight School is a place for teachers and community people, and now students, to teach something—a skill such as leather making, soapstone carving, quilting, etc. It is giving people a different view of themselves."

"We've really adapted the idea that you have to identify the assets of your community; what the streets are, who can do what, what the associations are, formal and informal. By getting in touch with what people do—like the group of women who walk together each day in Camptonville, which we refer to as the Women's Walking Group—we learn more about our community. These women have friends and family members who will join them. People do for a long time only what they are passionate about. And we are interested in sustainability. If we can get people involved through what we can identify as their passion, they'll bring their friends along…and once something is started, it has to continue on its own or it will die."

TONIE HILLIGOSS, YUBA WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Increasingly, community people are finding their way into schools. They read to children, are audiences for children's portfolios, provide some of their expertise. We note the experience of children in Barnard, South Dakota who have a regular visitor from the community. Our Research Associate, Richard Landry, documented the work of Al Bussian, who regularly visits the third grade classroom. He writes:

> A senior citizen (an 84-year-old retired farmer) has been coming to third grade and sharing his experiences and expertise. He is a verbal/oral historian with a fantastic memory for names, dates, and places. He talked about the Depression when the students studied about it in Social Studies. Every Thursday he brings in pieces of antique equipment to show the third graders. When I was there, he had a rope-making machine that he demonstrated to the students. The third trade teacher commented: "We've adopted Al and Al's definitely adopted the school. He eats lunch with us every day and just is our honorary grandpa. He still drives and is self-sufficient and is able to go and he devotes his time to the children here in Barnard."

One of the publications produced by the third graders, "Adventures with Al Bussian," contains narratives written about Al Bussian as well as photographs. We provide one of the accounts in the booklet, written by Brandon Taylor:

Excerpt from "Adventures with Al Bussian"

Al Bussian talked to us to tell us how hard it was to farm in the 1930s. When he was farming they had no rubber tires but they had steel tires. It was so hard to go through mud because some of the steel tires had no traction. The steel tires also broke easier.

Al also had a Model T Ford. It didn't have antifreeze. They couldn't drive it in the winter because the water would freeze. They couldn't buy PRESTONE because it was too expensive….When they got stuck in the mud they had to push the car.

In the loft of the barn there were holes to push into the six pens for the cows and horses. Al didn't like driving horses. They had to pick corn by hand to give to the animals. He didn't like to ride horses because they only had work horses and because he had no saddle. They did have BRONCOS but he never rode them. I think it was fun visiting Al. It made me feel like I was helping him farm. It is fun when Al comes.

Another example of a teacher reaching out for community support came from the Yuba Watershed Alliance. "I started putting up a big list in my classroom, on open house night, of all the things I didn't know how to do but would like my students to learn. My question was 'Can anyone help?' I had a lot of people who came back to me to say 'I'd love to do this.'"

The process of initiating or extending the scope of community involvement in schools also varies. Some practices appear more successful than others. In many cases individual teachers initiate the involvement with community members. A teacher in Tillamook, Oregon, Kelli Ramsey, told us how she began her collaboration with community mentors and teachers.

> At the middle school in Tillamook we have developed what we call the exploratory class. It meets for half an hour every day. The classes run for six weeks and students select one. Teachers are encouraged to teach something they have a lot of interest in—whatever you want to do, sculpture, the history of baseball. Last year it got hard for me to keep coming up with personal interests each week so I began calling people I knew in the community to consider teaching something. I started a quilting class and the principal asked me if I knew how to quilt. And I said 'no but I would when the class was over, cause this lady is going to come in and do it.' Using community people just took off after that. I've done quilting three times, fly fishing once and camping several times. I have a list of eighteen dads now willing to come in and do the camping class.

> The rest of the staff is seeing how powerful this is—it's worked out really well. The only thing we haven't had success with is getting someone to donate a car for kids to take apart and put together.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

In the North Coast Rural Challenge Network, the collaboration between community and school has been facilitated by providing a funded coordinator in each of the four participating communities, whose job it is to link community people with the school by functioning as a talent scout for local expertise that teachers request and by organizing events in the school that draw in community members wanting to learn new things and network around issues and ideas. The coordinator from Mendocino, Deena Zarlin, explained her role for us:

> We have been helped a lot by having a Rural Challenge funded coordinator in each of our four districts. Now there's a human being that people can go to who isn't burdened by other administrative tasks, who is responsible to the community and to the teachers, acting as a liaison. As a coordinator, people in the community call me and I can match their interests with teachers in the school. We have also planned events in our community to bring people together who might not otherwise get together. We planned a high tech tea to bring people who work out of their homes and didn't have much contact with others doing the same thing. It was a chance for people to talk about their work and for us to learn more about community members. We also put on an event called the Net Commerce Convention [the school is the Internet provider for the town] to bring local businesses together to learn about how to get their business on the net. We had to turn people away. So we had to do it again. The community really appreciated it. We will soon bring together all the people in the arts to help them secure grants for their work and discuss their needs as an arts community. These activities provide another view of the school. We have also developed a newsletter that goes to parents and community people. Students are sharing some of their work along with all the announcements.

The value of having a person dedicated to the function of enhancing exchanges between school and community, a person who manages the space between spheres so as to create a new community space there, is evident in the foregoing remarks. This may be a good use of Rural Challenge funds that other sites can adopt.

Reducing the distance between school and community people seems to be a crucial by-product of the various community mentorship experiences in schools. Adult mentors speak of the ease they feel when they enter schools after these experiences. What was sometimes regarded as foreign territory—the school—is increasingly being seen as a locus of community interchange of values, traditions, culture, and services. A teacher from an Arkansas community told the story of how she brought her uncle, who was a collector of arrowheads, into her classroom:

> He was very shy and quiet. I had to coax him because he didn't want to do it. He was amazing. He didn't use big language but he could tell stories. He was an amazing storyteller and he had such a wealth of information, not only about arrowheads but about our area. And the kids were fantastic…We have to get the community and school boundaries to be less intimidating for both sides.

Curt Shaw, a participant from Belle Fourche, South Dakota, told of the tensions that existed between the school and the community over the changes that a new school program brought in. The tensions were relieved as the school invited adults in the community to specific events.

> We were part of a school restructuring process a few years ago. It resulted in a lot of unhappy board members who split into two factions. I was a lead teacher then. When we began the Rural School and Community Renewal program, people saw that teachers weren't out to change their kids' morals, but just wanted to prepare them for the next century. Colleen had taken some risks with her PE class and asked a square dance organization to come in and teach the kids the dances. She connected 27 adults in the community with her 27 children. In addition, a lot of community people came into the school for the first time with the recent business fair the school sponsored.

> "At the community-based Twilight School we find someone in the community who can teach different things—candle making, EMT, basketball, etc.—and then anyone can come and take the classes. A lot of people up here are entrepreneurs. One guy makes his living with leather working and a couple of people are nursery types. There used to be some [people] that many stayed away from…but when we got Twilight School people realized 'oh, he's not [just a problem]…he can teach us how to make candles or carve soapstone.' We are trying the Twilight School in each community to get people together."

A natural link between school and community occurs when learning resources at the school are shared widely. As technology changes the communication patterns of the wider society, access to knowledge and equipment that the school can make available has become a more valued resource to rural community people and, as a result, libraries, gyms and computer centers across Rural Challenge communities are increasingly attracting community people into the school sphere.

> "I go to the school to learn about using the computer and it's all free."
>
> A COMMUNITY MEMBER, SOUTHEAST REGIONAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CONVOCATION

The Eldorado project director, Mark Marshall, talked with us about the important function the school can serve in the community and how educators need to be aware of meeting wider community needs:

> The school in our community should be a place where everybody, all ages, any age, comes to get information, get some knowledge…As a small town, we can't afford to not continue to educate ourselves and get skills, whether we do it through a grant writing class in our school or a leadership training series done by the Agricultural Extension Agency….It's easier for us [to attract community members] because we're the only school in town and in the county. We don't have competition as far as being the learning resource….You have to find ways of reaching everyone, all the different parts.

Across the country we have been told consistently that students are the local experts when it comes to technology. They teach adults how to get access to the Internet and how to become more proficient computer users. Through these exchanges, adults begin to see their young people as valuable community resources which sets the flow of interaction between community and school going in two directions. Community members feel welcomed and find a role for themselves in their local school and at the same time students extend their work and interests beyond the traditional school context well into the community.

At the regional meeting in South Dakota, a group including three teachers, four high school students and four community members, all women, from Willow Lake, South Dakota, a town of 320, gave the following presentation:

> Our Rural Challenge project…is to create a Wellness Center inside and adjacent to the school. The community currently uses the gym and levels of school stairs as a walking/exercise track. They have archery in the basement and community volleyball in the gym one night a week. And on Sundays, families can use the gym for recreation. A small building near the school is in the process of being turned into a weight room. It currently has some equipment—weights, stationery bikes, and a treadmill, but the equipment is not heavy duty and will not stand up to constant use by the school athletic teams as well as community people. [We]…want to start up a center so [we] are enlisting the business class to draw up a business plan where students and some adults can run the center—not as a membership club, but as a walk-in center. This keeps their liability insurance down. [We] plan to enlist the services of a physical therapist who will come over once a week for sessions. The only other wellness center is in Huron, 45 miles away. They went to check out the wellness center in Belle Fourche which has a pool. But it is private, not attached to the school. They charge $2 to $3 for a day pass and some believe the center is not growing because people cannot afford the fee.

PRESERVING COMMUNITIES AND CULTURES

The intimate connection between the business of school and the business of the community is present in many communities because there is a sense of urgency around their work. As one Yampa community person said, "It is truly about preservation."

Levi Hoover (Kasigluk, Alaska) provides students with a view of a fish, its parts, its place in the life of the village community, its tie to the culture.

> "Our table was set carefully, everything in its place, everything understood, our children ready to take in all that was there—then it was all pulled away, a new table set, nothing was familiar, we left without nourishment. We want to reset the table as it was before the white men came."
>
> CAROLINE HOOVER (KASIGLUK, ALASKA)
> DESCRIBING HOW HER CULTURE AND SYSTEM OF EDUCATION WERE TAKEN AWAY

Chris Benson, in "Native Ways of Learning," an interview with Rex Lee Jim (Bread Loaf Rural Teachers Network Magazine) notes that preservation concerns motivated the Navajo parents and grandparents on the Rock Point School Board to influence the curriculum of their school so that it would better reflect local traditions and values. They commissioned the writing of *Between Sacred Mountains: Navajo Stories and Lessons from the Land* because they wanted their children "to be aware of their own unique history and to understand its relevance to the problems and challenges of today." Both parents and teachers, he wrote, "saw a need to help young people bridge the gap between their textbook and the world of television and the thread of wisdom their grandparents carry on, unbroken, from the past....Production of the book involved community people of all ages, from 80-year-old George Blue Eyes, who still plants an annual crop of corn and melons with a planting stick, to Rex Lee Jim, who was 15 years old and a Rock Point High School student when he began working on the book during the summers."

Learning from Laguna: A Community Sketch of Cultural and Historical Survival

The mission statement for Laguna Middle School reads:

It is the responsibility of all school employees, parents, students, and the community, working cooperatively, to ensure: All Laguna Middle School students will emerge as successful learners, who are responsible and participating members of Laguna and other world societies.

After the school's first year, Nick Cheromiah helped to create the School Restructuring Council. The Council's goals were to take into consideration the needs of various constituency groups within the community as well as focus on improving four areas: 1) curriculum and instruction; 2) placing an emphasis on high expectations; 3) home/school/community relations; and 4) participatory management/shared governance. The Council is composed of the principal, three members of the professional staff, one parent, one student from each grade, and one community member-at-large.

Many initiatives have been created to address the four areas of the School Restructuring Council. For example, the Cultural/Technology Project was begun in 1994. Floyd Solomon, a well-known Laguna artist who is head of the Laguna Educational Foundation, described his involvement in the project:

When I came into the Laguna Middle School, I came in as part of a cultural technology project participant. There were three people: a curriculum development specialist, another community person, and myself. What we began to understand was that the actual idea germinated out of a concept that recognized the fact that many people saw that the community's culture and traditions were going downhill—particularly as older people began to die. What are we going to do about that? (In fact, some 60 percent of the entire population of the reservation is under twenty-five years of age.) Within thirty years, our language would be nil. So, the very first thing we did, and this was a very smart move on behalf of the principal, what he did was he said: "You know, I don't want you guys to just—you know we have a project here. I want you to create it. I don't want this to be a canned project. I want this project to conform to the profile and needs of the community. That's what I want. Your responsibility is to develop that." So our first job was to see what the community's needs were.

I believe that what we did was to understand how the community networks—how it functions. Who were the key players in the community in relation to the traditions? Who were the key players in the community in relation to the politics of the community? There's just so many facets that we began to access the function and interrelation among all these networks. Once we did that, then we asked: "What can we do to create a bridge between our school, our staff, and the community members?"

Several initiatives came out of the Cultural/Technology Project. Members of the community volunteered to come in on Fridays to cook traditional foods for the teachers. The adopt-a-teacher program was created so that new teachers would have a "foster family" within the community. Finally, the Language Revitalization Program was instituted. Volunteers ranging in age from 23 to 84 came into the school to teach students their native language of Keresan. Today, although this program has been discontinued at the school site, volunteers continue to teach in the program within each of the six Laguna villages.

Constructed in 1992, Laguna Middle School is a modern structure by all accounts. The school is fully automated—high tech computers, software, and televisions, including classroom phones. Laguna also has one of the largest middle school gymnasiums in New Mexico with a capacity of 1,350. (The tribe uses it for tribal activities.) Yet, even in this modern setting, the Laguna people have woven into the structure their culture and community. Approaching the front doors of the school, the windows have twelve representations of Laguna's clans: Water, Lizard, Snake, Antelope, Sun, Roadrunner, Parrot, Oak, Coyote, Turquoise, Badger, and Corn. (The Bear representation was rubbed off by young children, but bits of it still remain.) On both sides of the foyer, before you actually enter the main entrance to the school, are paintings of "Old Laguna." The painting on the left, looking from a southeast view of the village, is a depiction of Laguna in modern times during the winter. The painting on the right, looking from a south view of the village, is a depiction of Laguna at the turn of the century. This painting is a depiction from late summer. (The glow of the clouds gives away the time of year.)

Laguna dancers performing The Butterfly Dance.

Like the work commissioned by Navajo parents and grandparents, other communities have engaged children in preserving and fostering their heritage through the arts. Schools in Alabama, South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin have worked with Larry Long to plan community celebrations to "help bring students and people in the community together. The kids use what elders tell them about growing up and working, and turn them into songs. The relationship between the kids writing the songs, giving their interpretations of what the elders have to say is great to see."[42]

In some rural areas the school building, often the largest public building in town, is considered a resource for the entire community with the result that the flow between school business and community interests is increased. In some cases, school buildings are used for weddings and funerals and this clearly marks them as important community spaces. In sites where the boundaries around schools and schooling separate them from the community, the Rural Challenge initiative seems to be helping communities change these patterns. In Idalia, Colorado, the community raised money for a new gym which is essentially a community facility. They want the school to survive. At St. Paul, Virginia, the chorus is no longer a school chorus, but a community-school chorus. The school gym and equipment are not just the base for a school fitness center but a community-school wellness center. This represents a shift. The school doors are now open.

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

Tonie Hilligoss defined what the Yuba Watershed Alliance sees as its twin goals.

> **One of our primary efforts is building community and trying to insure that every part of our community contributes to a healthy whole. That's what we are working hard at. Our second area is having kids identify with the place they are in. This means changing learning at the school so there's more of a context of place. We don't think we can do the second without starting the first.**

In our discussion of Student Work in this report, we detailed the purposes, practices and outcomes of putting place at the center of the curriculum. A significant portion of the work of place, which is experiential, project-oriented, and contextualized within local issues is the work that involves community service projects. We treat this topic extensively here because we consider community service projects to be a powerful means for creating and reaping the benefits of a locally centered, healthy community.

Over the past two years we have observed the growth and deepening of this work all across Rural Challenge sites. What may begin as a project that earns students credit for work done in and for the community has blossomed, in many instances, into experiences of authentic community building based on richly textured interdependencies that create mutual benefits for students and community members, schools and local businesses, teachers and local community people. Moreover, community service has taken some different directions in Rural Challenge sites than those that have become the norm in schools. Rather than a once a week trip to an elder center or nursing home as an intergenerational exchange, which would likely be a good thing even if nothing else happened, it has become an activity related directly to work in school—collecting and recording oral histories, identifying places and people in photographs of the local area, exchanging ideas about a park rehabilitation project.

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[42] We have included some examples of lyrics related to oral history accounts in the supplementary text accompanying this report.

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Rather than a quarterly clean up of the river bank, which again is a useful activity, the clean-up is related to studies about how to educate members of the community to take better care of the river bank and ways of enhancing the area. Rather than reading to children in lower grades or serving as "a buddy," again good things, middle and secondary students are also sharing their project-based learning, serving as genuine teachers.

As relationships around local issues and common purposes develop through community service initiatives, they take on a complex life of their own. What may have started out as an entrepreneurial internship with a local business can develop into a new venture that enhances the economic conditions of the community; what began as a school-based activity can spread to other sites providing a wider dissemination of local knowledge and traditions. From working and learning together, people of all ages and different backgrounds have begun to see themselves as a deeply rooted, interdependent collective with common interests, values, and responsibilities. Where elders in the community already had that perspective, students are discovering it and coming to value it as an important heritage. Where spheres of activity have developed isolated from one another, this work, emerging from the Rural Challenge impetus, has provided a new space for people to come together around issues and concrete activities, discover common ties and, over time, *become* a community.

Cheri Fieber, a student from Clear Lake, South Dakota, gave the following account of her service learning experience. It illustrates the way community service is assuming a transformative quality, another form of mutuality.

> I thought it would mean raking leaves or shoveling snow. Instead, it was about going to visit an elderly person twice a week. I was reluctant to go and was uncomfortable in a setting with elderly people. I overcame those feelings. The learning was real—I learned a lot of history and because I helped the woman with her financial accounts, math assumed a real context. I learned the realities of getting older and got to know my teachers better. I also saw sides of fellow students I had never seen.

A teacher from the Yuba Watershed Alliance added to this account as follows:

> When we started the community service requirement for 8th graders, it seemed like just a requirement with everyone trying to find something to do to get it over with. Last September, there was a wildfire and the homes of several families from one of our project's high schools were wiped out. As we were discussing the fire in my creative writing class, the kids said we should organize a collection of clothes and…send messages to the kids to let them know we're with them. We deferred class for a week and a half and we went totally into fire relief. The students organized a collection of clothes and cleaning materials, washed everything, doled out jobs and then found people who could truck the stuff up there and wrote notes to put in the bags. Service took on another meaning.

Much of the community work that benefits multiple participants is related to restoration, conservation, research leading to public communication and action, reconnecting people across age and occupational boundaries. Community-based projects in schools have centered on local history with students documenting oral histories through photographs, videos, CD ROMs, websites, and quilts, finding what used to be present, building historical walks, nature trails and museums. Students have researched local history and have become active in restoring historical buildings, setting up exhibitions with museum people who are teaching them how to create professional displays of their photographs and interpretive work, and have brought this work to a wider audience as docents of museums and

PEACHAM'S
NATURE TRAIL

authors of tourist information pamphlets and web pages. The consensus among Rural Challenge participants is that the work of researching and writing local history and heritage "has been an enormous contribution to the community." An Edcouch-Elsa, Texas parent and teacher describes the work her daughter is involved in and the value they both place on it:

> The students have produced three journals by writing essays and publishing them. There is a lot of information about people in the community—a 100-year-old lady who had never spoken about her past is now so thrilled to know that anybody would be interested in what she had to say. The interviews of the elders were done in Spanish and then must be translated into English. Krystal, my daughter, works with them. Her job was to listen to the interviews on tape and translate them into English and put them into the computer. My daughter has had so much this year to talk to me about. I used to ask her what she did in school—"Oh, nothing, the same old thing"—and now she comes everyday—"I handled the camcorder and we interviewed....Mom, did you take part in the walk-out back in 1967?" The community now comes forward with things to say.

"The historical society in our little community got a grant to buy a stamp mill. And it is planning a restoration that will involve students in the school."

ASIA COY (TEACHER, ELK CITY, IDAHO)

"In Pollock, South Dakota a school project is rehabilitating used trailers to increase the supply of housing in the community. Students are gaining good experience in design and construction as well as learning more about community needs. This work is being done alongside community volunteers."

In many communities, students are publishing the local newspaper, providing a needed service to the community. These newspapers are filled with local advertising, representing a solid connection between school and community work. The school at Birchwood, Wisconsin (New Paradigm Partners), as we noted earlier, "started a community newspaper because there wasn't one." It started out as a monthly publication but is now published twice a month. Students research, write, lay out and print the paper and sell advertisements. They are now working to get more community writers. And the

Students at the PACERS community newspaper program discuss layouts.

community newspapers developed by schools in the various PACERS sites serve some 250,000 people across rural Alabama.

Not all of the community service work originates from the school. Some comes from Rural Challenge community activities such as town meetings or as a result of the work of local action committees. As schools and communities increase their contact around authentic work and pressing issues, they come to see each other as allies and valued resources. The boundaries between groups become more permeable, the roles more elastic. Students become teachers and ambassadors for community concerns, businesses and community organizations seek out students to undertake work that would not be possible without their know-how and time. It likely makes little sense to call these efforts school or community service projects. The activity itself creates community in a seamless web of interrelated contributions towards enhancing the common good.

Another example of the interrelated spheres within the community is visible in how Seaside, Oregon and the North Coast Rural Challenge Network in California carry out their Rural Challenge work. In Seaside, all entities receiving public funds must have an educational component. They are obligated to bring their work to children and young people in the schools, to explain what they are doing and why. Children also go to the sites of this public work to see firsthand how it is being planned and carried out. Children and young people are asked for their ideas about aspects of the work. In each of the four communities in the North Coast Network, the community Rural Challenge coordinator solicits proposals from teachers, parents, community people and students for projects and activities that further the NCRCN aims. They have a local committee to determine which projects to support.[45] Projects can start in school or in the community but every project must include students and community members.

We heard many accounts of community service projects that expanded into important contributions to the welfare of the whole town. Ginny Jaramillo of the Colorado Charter Schools shared with us what happened in Marble:

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[45] We present in the supplementary volume outlines of a sample of North Coast project proposals.

> Marble really took off in spite of the fact that it is a tiny community and there are only 18 kids. They built a town hockey-skating rink, bought the pump, built the pond and now they have a hockey rink. And with the length of the winter in Marble, it just makes sense. The school opening in Marble has just transformed that community and one thing about the network I don't think you could ever describe is the tremendous support we give one another. We have been through some real lows at all of our schools and then some highs. We have seen from the inside all of the problems, like the governance problems. Like at Marble, hostilities broke out [among] school board members...We have talked about why there is so much latent hostility and wondered if it was related to mining and digging into the earth. The school seems the best vehicle to break through the hostilities because now they not only have the skating rink, but the school is actually in a historic building which was once a museum. Some of the older people said they didn't want it to be a school, they wanted the museum, so the school kids are creating a museum. It started out with a former administrator but now two new guys have come to the community and are doing a great job of pulling things together. The museum is a local history museum and they are training the kids as docents.

Another story of school and community merging together—this time through the church—illustrates how they become interwoven and in the process create a sense of community and belonging. It comes from Elmira Cura, the Edcouch-Elsa art teacher:

> Since [migrant workers] migrate in April, everyone is gone, so the churches in that area start to have a Mass to give blessing to the families that are leaving. They ask people to bring fruit, like apples if they are going to go picking apples, or if they are going to use a hoe, bring a hoe to the church—either the tools or the fruit of the harvest wherever they were going to work—bring them into the service and the priest would have them make a procession. Besides my job, something I do for my church on my own time, is make banners. They asked me to do a banner in two days. It usually takes me a month to do a banner if I work until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning because my style is three-dimensional where I add things to put on the banner. I talked to the students about the request. I realized that my students are migrants and a lot of these families were actually going to leave as well. They loved the idea and said they would help with it.

> We started brainstorming what is it like when you go to the fields, what do you see, and I didn't start with the religious. I waited to see what they would say. I know that we have the Virgin Mary of Guadeloupe who is part of the culture, but should we include her in this banner, because on this banner we are going to have hills and fields. There was a debate about which image to use—the Virgin of Guadeloupe? And others said no, we should go with Jesus. We got the rough draft, and the drawings, and we pulled it off. The procession into the church carried this large banner and this banner will be used in three churches in different communities: Edcouch, Elsa and La Villa.

As yet another example of a school project becoming an opportunity for learning as well as a community celebration or event, the students at the Peacham Elementary School in Vermont, have joined forces with an environmental organization, Common Roots, to create a product that feeds them intellectually and, in a literal sense, physically. Each year students in fourth, fifth and sixth grades participate in the Common Roots "Gardens from around the World" project. Drawing on a long history of school gardening that began in the early 1800s and peaked with the youth victory gardens during the first World War, Vermont teachers are building on the premise that students learn by doing and that this learning should be cultivated, not discouraged by the form and content of school work. Each grade is responsible for the creation, maintenance, and harvesting of a garden. Some of the gardens are ornamental, others vegetable, but all are connected to particular themes such as the earth, the continents and multiculturalism. The purpose of the work is to improve children's literacy in three areas: agriculture, ecology, and culture.

What we notice about the work is first and foremost that it is obviously concerned with place but also comes out of the place. The ground of Peacham is both context and content of the learning. Additionally, as it is seasonal, the work has become part of the cycling of the seasons both academically and ecologically. Perhaps the most important component of this project is the spiraling outward from the gardens themselves into a community celebration when the products are displayed and the work is discussed. Much of the produce goes to those in need. In this sense, it also has a community service base.

Community-school exchange at its best involves a variety of face-to-face interactions. One vehicle for the exchange in a number of Rural Challenge sites has been community meetings that involve school personnel, students and community people and give attention to matters that affect the respective communities and their sustainability. The issues are often about development concerns, health matters, school and governmental consolidations, the environment, youth problems, school and recreational needs. These are real issues, actively examined and vigorously debated.

In many Rural Challenge settings, these "community forums" are held several times a year. And because the schools are the main community gathering places, these meetings most often occur in the schools, though in some settings they also occur in homes and churches.

We follow with a report on a community meeting we attended in Howard, South Dakota.[44]

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[44] Such meetings could also be described in a variety of other Rural Challenge settings. They are common in the New Paradigm Partners sites in Wisconsin, the Center for School Change communities in Minnesota, School at the Center communities in Nebraska, the Santa Fe Indian School in New Mexico, and the Yuba Watershed Alliance sites in California, among others.

Creating Community in New Spaces:
Community Vision Meeting in Howard, South Dakota

It was a gray Sunday evening in March with the temperature hovering around ten degrees. Gingerly, people made their way over icy sidewalks into the cafeteria of Howard High School. There was a general mood of good humor in the otherwise business-like formality among those attending. The pre-meeting conversations indicated that the issues the group would struggle with this evening were continuations of community conversations that had occurred in the three small and three large group meetings held previously during the year. Groups of people nestled comfortably around what must have come to be "their" tables in previous gatherings.

As the group assembled, students continued their preparations for projecting computer images onto a large screen. Nearby, an easel with pad and markers stood waiting for ideas to surface. Sitting at the long cafeteria tables in the dining hall where the Howard secondary students, teachers and staff usually ate, were a newspaper photographer, teachers, store owners, students, the mayor, farmers and senior citizens, each seemingly confident that their thoughts and contributions mattered and could make a difference.

This was the culminating meeting of the year—the fourth large group meeting held like all the other large group meetings in the school cafeteria. Town members had hosted the small group meetings in their homes. Everyone had engaged in the same reading 'assignments' and was now adequately prepared to 'put their heads together' over materials and student-generated reports focused on the subsistence of rural schools, communities, and ways of life. In an attempt to determine what works best for the good of the whole, this multi-generational group considered the needs, shortcomings, and assets of their own community in order to better understand and be able to strategically enable their town—Howard, South Dakota—to become a healthy, thriving community with a desirable quality of life, an economically viable place in which to raise a family and grow old. To this task, the group of invested community members came carrying their notebooks which held notes from their small group discussion, some readings and Howard student survey results.

It takes special skill to convene a meeting of seventy people with diverse opinions, different livelihoods and, sometimes, opposing agendas. High school teacher Randy Parry facilitated the process—acknowledging raised hands by addressing each person by their first name. The contributors were courteous and diplomatic, the audience attentive as they discussed such sensitive topics as why local citizens prefer to drive 20 miles to shop in a more commercially competitive market.

In an attempt to understand the economic implications of where local people shopped, they compared spending trends identified in a recent high school survey with one conducted two years earlier. Of particular importance was the discussion around why people decided to spend their disposable income outside of Miner County. One person commented, "Since I've been coming to these meetings, I've become more aware of the need to spend locally." There was general consensus that "A lot of people don't think about where they spend their money. They just go." or "They

think their small amount of spending won't make a difference." The factors offered to explain why money left the town included jealousy—one neighbor not wanting other neighbors to "do better than themselves," competitive pricing which could be offered to larger markets, and availability of merchandise. "Since some items are not available in town, once you go out of town you buy it all there." The suggestion that local business owners should "be more appreciative of customers who come in" was responded to by a shop owner who recognized he needed to be a problem-solver and diversify his products to meet customers' needs. He added, "Don't buy green shoes if everybody wants red." The laughter that greeted his remarks indicated that he might have a few pairs of green shoes lying around in his inventory.

During the discussion of possible solutions, the suggestion of continuing to educate consumers and business people concerning the importance of spending locally generated the most enthusiasm. Advertising local businesses was also proposed—high school students had already ventured into marketing by developing advertisements that local businesses could use for free. They coined the slogan "Buy major in Miner" to encourage local commerce. Radio was suggested as another means to advertise. In response to this suggestion, one elderly participant bemoaned the days when Howard birthdays were announced "on air" and "Everyone in the coffee shop would wish you happy birthday. Now there isn't much on Howard news and sometimes and if you don't get it turned on just right you miss it." Someone suggested that the reason people in Howard were so slow to change was because "Norwegians take a longer time." This good-natured humor, acknowledging their predominant ethnic heritage, was countered a moment later by a comment that there was a general lack of esteem as a community. This observation was greeted with audible consensus.

During the collective brainstorming, students and Parry used the overhead to guide the conversation. They asked the community to rank their five suggested solutions in order of most to least cost-effective. At the same time they tabulated which solutions would garner the greatest community support. The group discussed the best long-term solution, the shortest time to implement, the best use of local people and resources and then used the ranking chart to suggest a course of action based on the group's response. In the course of the discussion one participant offered, "We think too much about money. We need to look at community—building pride, and working together and looking out for each other. You know, 'United we stand; divided we fall.' Building human foundations as the essence of community is important. We take that for granted."

Audible agreement indicated general support for this sentiment providing an appropriate segue into a sensitive topic of concern that both students and community members had voiced in some of the small group sessions. Recognizing that there seemed to be an issue of alcohol use among some youth, the participants asked, "Why do students drink?" One student suggested, "There is nowhere to go and nothing to do." Parents who grew up in Howard remembered similar feelings leading to their drinking as teens. A relative newcomer to Howard suggested that "There is something we've forgotten in our educational system. We are not teaching kids to think creatively. We haven't taught them the processes to think of things they can do. We are passive reactors. We watch TV and don't contribute. Interaction is critical. Any curriculum in any school ought to include things to use your imagination." Acknowledging the pervasive state mandated standardized testing movement, one participant quipped, "Yeah, and then you'd have to test them on it."

Though no resolution was reached concerning what would ultimately become a much larger discourse over the use of alcohol, the discussion was carried on informally as small groups clustered around the dining hall tables to eat "the best ice cream in South Dakota," produced 40 miles away at South Dakota State University. The proposal of a two year resident (a relative newcomer) in town to help kids and community people start a Howard radio station was informally discussed in small groups. This same person commented on the need to raise the self-esteem of the community. When he opened a bank account after moving to town, the fact that he had moved to Howard was greeted with astonishment. "They wondered why on earth I came to Howard, South Dakota. We just have to get more pride."

It is probable that changes in the self-perception of the community will occur as a result of town meetings and the subsequent action plans designed to revitalize the community. Already, the barriers between school and community are dissolving. One community member, speaking to the power of the Community Vision Meetings said, "I never felt like I was welcome in the school before we started having these community meetings. Now I feel comfortable walking down the halls."

After the meeting disbanded and the crowd dispersed, Superintendent of Schools Jim Lentz, with assistance from Randy Parry, finished washing the ice cream dishes. It was 11:00 p.m., a mere nine hours before they would both be back in these same halls beginning another day at Howard High. Though it had been a lot of work, they both felt good about the progress they had made at the meeting and during the year. Indicating his agreement with a sentiment expressed earlier in the evening, Lentz remarked, "Did you see me beaming when that man said that building human foundations was the essence of community? I almost jumped out of my seat I was so happy to hear that. It seems as though we're all realizing that it is not just about money."

As these examples of community-school engagement illustrate, when people who have common knowledge, common roots, histories that link them, and reasonable comfort in communicating when they come together to take up common concerns, the possibilities are exceptional. They can teach each other their specific areas of expertise and wisdom and create a worthwhile service for the town and its environs. They can engage in collective construction of the commonwealth. This is one of the most desired expressions of citizenship and democratic action that exists and is central to the Rural Challenge mission. We have observed a growing value of and ability to implement this kind of engagement across the Rural Challenge sites. When projects become venues for community involvement that are diverse, real, and significant in the lives and futures of local citizens they can set a new standard for participation and active interconnectedness of community members. It is difficult to imagine that this work, once begun in earnest, will not be sustained and enriched in the future. The account which follows addresses well this understanding.

The Huron, South Dakota *Daily Plainsman* wrote on Sunday, September 27, 1998:

> **Pity the small farming community in the 20th century. Predators abound. Corporate farms. Spotty harvests. No jobs. Bored kids. Population drift. Old age. Death.**

Andrew Fonken, a senior student at the Willow Lake School responded in a spirited manner on September 30th as follows:

> **Praise the Willow Lake area. No predators. Few corporate farms. Bountiful 1998 harvests. Low unemployment. Those who want to find work can. Energetic kids. Extra curricular activities. Jobs. Volunteers. Population drift—more people moving back to the Willow Lake area. Old age and death. More young people moving here to keep Willow Lake alive and growing into the 21st century.**

> "We are at a crucial point. The Rural Challenge has given us a starting point and a reason to start investigating more community learning. We still need a very strong push and support to expand what we are doing now in isolated places. It's going to be a long, ambitious road."
>
> JEAN HAAR, PRINCIPAL,
> CLEAR LAKE, SOUTH DAKOTA

Constraints and Opportunities in Expanding the Work of Place

As noted earlier, work around place has become virtually universal, though in most settings it involves a class or two rather than the entire curriculum. Moreover, it more typically involves a project encompassing from four to eight weeks rather than an entire semester or year. It is clear that making place the real center of pedagogy is still a large shift that most sites have not managed to undertake with fullness. Incremental movement towards more integration of place in the curriculum and activities of students and community members seems to be the norm, even as the Rural Challenge envisions more comprehensive change. Could more be expected in this environment in which the pressures that keep schools typically textbook and seatwork-based continue to be large?

In this section of the report we examine the constraints that tend to limit a more central role for place—the local context—in the curriculum and as a base for greater school-community mutuality. While we focus on commonly experienced impediments to expanding Rural Challenge work in classrooms and communities, we also provide examples of how some sites have changed these constraints into opportunities to develop and deepen further the work around place and mutuality. Before presenting these ideas and examples, however, we need to keep reminding ourselves, as well as others interested in the work of the Rural Challenge, of two important things: time and diversity.

Many of the sites are just completing their initial year in the Challenge and others are only finishing their second year. When we look at the changes in schooling against the backdrop of time, we see the power of place-based practices gaining a foothold in the traditional school schema and expanding from there. All of the second year sites attending our Research and Evaluation Convocations could report considerable growth and expansion of their work around place. Moreover, first year sites were moving faster and seemed more able to define the importance of work in the local community than was the case in the previous year.[45]

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[45] Our survey data, which we will present as a full report in the spring, 1999, corroborates this conclusion. On virtually all dimensions of place- and community-oriented work, to include community and parent involvement, responses suggest that a deepening is occurring.

The second necessary reminder relates to the diversity of sites and, therefore, contexts and stories that represent the various Rural Challenge schools and communities. Variations in local culture, history, current economic conditions, size of schools and districts, state and local roles in school reform, teacher connections to the community, as well as a host of other factors, make the stories of individual sites unique as each seeks to implement a pedagogy of place as the center of school and community development.

In this report we address some general constraints that are felt in varying degrees across communities for the purpose of understanding how a radical change in schooling and community development puts pressure on the status quo and, in turn, receives pressure to remain peripheral. We will also provide specific examples of various sites' efforts to turn those pressures and constraints into opportunities for enhancing a concept and value of place. We do this in order to share strategies that are working across the Rural Challenge sites and further the educative purpose of our work.

THE STRUCTURE AND CULTURE OF SCHOOLS

Many of the sites attending our Research and Evaluation Convocations named features of the traditional school structure, along with school and community cultures, as the most difficult hurdles to overcome in their efforts to expand the work of place and the related, more active, project-oriented, longer-term pedagogies which engage students and community members in real work in support of the *commonwealth*. The ubiquitous standard high school curriculum that is taught in discrete courses of a specified number of minutes over the course of a day makes it difficult for schools to find space and time in the schedule for open-ended, longer-term interdisciplinary and community-based studies. Small schools, for example, have long been criticized for not offering more courses. The kind of systemic change being promoted by the Rural Challenge is a counter to such a view. And who has ever gone to a school that didn't have six to eight separate courses/subject matters to work through each day? The power of conventional experience for teachers, parents, and community people is large. The conventional schedule is particularly problematic in larger schools and districts where making even small scheduling changes requires coordinating various layers within the school and the administrative bureaucracy. Even in smaller, more autonomous schools that aren't hampered by bureaucratic structures, however, the pressure exerted by college admissions criteria, including what is seen as a need to score well on standardized ACT and SAT tests, tends to constrain the amount of time teachers believe students can "afford" to spend on particularized, place-based work.

Related to the structure of the typical school day is the teacher culture in schools that is steeped in isolation. Individual teachers are often left to their own devices in working out practices aimed at meeting the various externally imposed curricular goals. A culture of conversation is not the norm in schools. Breaking down the isolation and the emphasis on individual achievement has presented a challenge to some sites' ability to expand place-based curriculum beyond the occasional project injected into school-as-usual. And, sometimes, when the obvious hurdles within the structure of schooling have been overcome and students are in the community doing research, community service work, making connections outside of the school building, some community members, holding onto traditional notions of what counts as learning, such as being in school, doing well on standardized tests, and staying close to the traditional scope and sequence of textbook curricula, are skeptical of the value of students spending time out of school. The traditions of segmented and bounded activities related to school as an institution run deep in many parts of our society, reinforcing the hurdles some Rural Challenge sites need to overcome to make *place* central.[46]

"The culture of the schools needs changing—more time for talking, planning, finding and sharing resources. Teachers and students need a lot of time to talk."

Similarly, the historic separation of schools and communities may make schools foreign territory to community members with the result that they don't see themselves as possible educators or co-learners with students. The routine of schools and their lack of flexible scheduling tends to make it difficult for community members to be more fully engaged in a process of exchanging information with students and teachers. Participants in the Rural Challenge work universally agree that the community needs to have easier access, more comfortable exchange and deeper involvement with those in the schools. These sentiments are expressed in these words of a Yuba Watershed Alliance educator:

> We sometimes have trouble matching all the community interests with the school schedules. The school schedules come at the beginning of semesters and all. A community person's interest can come any time. So we have internships that haven't been filled—no student has signed up to go out with a registered forester to learn how to write a logging plan, but someday some kid might.

FACILITATING COMMUNICATION AMONG TEACHERS

While the pressures to keep schools tradition bound exist, many Rural Challenge schools and networks have taken significant steps to reduce pervasive isolationist, individualistic, and separatist notions among teachers and community members. In most cases the significant steps that help to enlarge the Rural Challenge work appear to depend greatly on communication, among teachers, between students and community elders, across schools and networks of Rural Challenge sites, and through opportunities for participants to share the processes, products, and benefits of locally rooted pedagogy to ever-wider audiences.

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[46] Culture may also play a significant role in how deep the divisions between school and community are perceived by community members. In Alaska and Texas, for example, the students' presence in the community is considered natural and welcome, perhaps reflecting cultural notions of the "place" for children among Native Americans and Chicanos.

Spreading the ideas and benefits of this work among classroom teachers is generally seen as the first step towards expansion. Most sites, for example, have not yet overcome some of the skepticism that exists about making place the center of the curriculum. A teacher from Clear Lake, South Dakota, told us: "Some of us have ideas and we are doing some good work. Other staff members are observing what we do and might say, 'that's kind of cool,' but they haven't moved. It will be hard to spread into the community in a big way until we actually spread the ideas within our own faculty."

Many participants in various Rural Challenge sites have attempted to spread the place-based ideas by inviting colleagues to view work being done in their classrooms. Several teachers told us that it was only after visiting another classroom where place-oriented work was going on, along with a good deal of conversation, that they felt confident enough to make some beginnings.

Jeanne Surface, an administrator from Wakefield, Nebraska, is very intentional in cajoling and lobbying the "lounge lizards and coffee shop commandos who sit on the outside and tear down new ideas" into supporting the changes brought about by the core group of enthusiasts from the faculty and community. She believes the incremental steps being taken will change the culture of the school about what learning is and possibly even what learning the basics might be.

Many sites are actively working to overcome the isolation and lack of collaboration that strangles attempts to widen and deepen place-based pedagogy. Rural Challenge participants tend to agree that teachers need more support and opportunities to work with each other and learn from the work of others if this work is to deepen as well as expand. An example of changing the typical school schedule to ensure communication and collaboration among teachers was described by Lydia Harding-Elder, principal of the Weldon, North Carolina school.

> I make sure my teachers have a 90-minute planning time during the day. There is no compromising on that. They have to have the time to integrate the project that [relates to the] place as well as the standard course of study. The standard course of study is the MINIMUM, not the max. The struggle has been that the teachers have not had the time to plan and to pull it all together, especially if they have to spend until 10 or 11:00 at night—a lot of teachers have families, they have to take care of home too. So planning that time during the day in school, EVERY day, brings that together, and that is what we have got. I get a lot of pressure from the Central Office and the State Department of Ed. that "Your teachers got 90 minutes of planning, they only have 60 with the students." But the planning is important because they have to be ready for the students. Also, if they work late, they are not in any shape to work with the kids the next day, and they need to be at their best when they are with the children.

A positive outcome of the increased communication among teachers resulting from professional development and collegial activities connected to newly implemented place-based curricula is a wider recognition of the benefits of student engagement in locally rooted work. Educators from a number of Rural Challenge sites are attributing the gradual, but nonetheless continuing growth and expansion of place-based curricula to the fact that it is so naturally cross-disciplinary. For example, writing is particularly important across fields in a pedagogy of place, and more and more teachers in science and math as well as history and English are paying attention to it. Because students clearly benefit from this real and important work linked to place, teachers seem increasingly more willing to take risks and go beyond the typical fare of schools—the regulatory work that keeps students in their seats doing mostly secondhand work. Jeanne Surface, for example, believes that the teachers in her site are teaching differently now because of the impact the activities have had on the students. During the weeks of place-based project work this past year, as an example, she noted that attendance went from a daily absence of 27 kids to 5 and the students who had been constant discipline problems "became invisible." They were too busy to be "in trouble."

> **"I observed that teachers have been willing to take risks, to go beyond what is typical, because they think it will help students learn better."**

Across the country, Rural Challenge sites are seeking ways to engage teachers in more conversations, not only among themselves but within the community as well. "Healthy schools and healthy communities grow out of forums around issues" was a comment that got ready agreement at various regional Research and Evaluation Convocations.

> **"Teachers need to be part of communities to be part of the community conversations. It is hard to build good school-community bonds if people in a place don't really care about the place. This is more than interest."**
>
> JOSEPH TRUJILLO, TEACHER, SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

■ BRINGING COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL TOGETHER

Systematic approaches to expanding pedagogy of place practices, often involving special professional development initiatives and school-community links, have been implemented in some areas. The Tillamook project, for example, supported a teacher internship program during which 25 teachers over the past year spent a concentrated period of time in a local business or service agency. They not only learned more about aspects of the community, they also identified ways of helping their students make more productive community connections. They discovered a wealth of educational offerings available in such places as a credit union, the local utility office, the National Estuary Project, the cable company, the Chamber of Commerce, the hospital, a travel agency, the Creamery Association, and an auto mechanics firm. The expectation in Tillamook is that teachers will be more apt to use the community if they know more about the community. Here again we recognize the importance of communication among people who might not ordinarily share information about their respective work and roles in creating and expanding a base for a curriculum of place.

Many of the Networks and Clusters comprising the Rural Challenge have also begun to implement policies and activities to encourage more thoughtful approaches to curriculum that connect schools and communities. One example of this effort to promote communication across sectors comes from the North Coast Rural Challenge Network. All projects that receive Rural Challenge funding in the North Coast's four communities must answer the following four questions about the connections within the work: How does the project connect with our theme of people, history, and place? How does the project interact with the community? How will you assess the community impact? How will the work be shared with other Northcoast members/sites? The fourth, as noted, involves sharing across the network. As another means of sharing work, all funded activities are also put on the project's web pages as well as featured in occasional video-conferences.

Another example of a Network actively supporting communication in a variety of ways that educate and link school and community people is in School at the Center (the Nebraska Rural Challenge network). The network supports professional development by making a large investment in teachers—through cluster institutes which provide opportunities for sharing ideas and questions, and by supporting participation in various writing programs and workshops organized by such organizations as REAL, Foxfire, the Nebraska Historical Society, and various humanities and scientific organizations. Through such efforts, teachers are growing in their understandings of the community focus of the School at the Center and are generating curricula that make the community and its resources centrally important.[47] School at the Center is also holding school-community meetings to discuss why it is important for students to be outside school buildings and making clear students' potential for becoming important community resources, real citizens. Looking ahead, School at the Center believes that these kinds of community meetings will be helped by having all participants read common texts, to get more deeply into the philosophy. We believe this will be useful. At this point in its work with the Rural Challenge, School at the Center reports that of their 18 member communities, seven have moved far down the path of becoming genuine community institutions. This needs to be seen as excellent progress.

Not only have sites supported the professional development of teachers and encouraged them to learn more about their communities, they have also brought the community into the sphere of schooling by sharing the work of place in public forums. In Wakefield, Nebraska, for example, parents were able to grasp the validity of the learning process as they observed students becoming better researchers, writers, and presenters of their ideas about the local environment. The success of such student presentations has inspired the school to implement an exhibition requirement for graduating seniors that will involve a panel of teachers, peers, and community members. Similarly, Randy Parry, a teacher from Howard, South Dakota remarked, "We have increased community consciousness about the work of the school, about the work of the students, the changing nature of the work. We have students now being speakers at major historical preservation events. Their work is becoming more public. So the school stuff is becoming more visible."

> **"Just look at the photographs of the students at work on these different projects. And look at the quality of the projects. They show better effort and more enthusiasm than anything I've seen in the colleges. They demonstrated a deep interest in what they were doing and they took pride in what they did. It was part of them, not just something they had to do for someone else....You can tell that the students cared about it. Work not cared about is thrown together. And it goes to the trash as it comes back."**
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> **JASPER HORNE, A COMMUNITY PERSON FROM ALBEMARLE, NORTH CAROLINA, AFTER EXAMINING PORTFOLIOS OF STUDENT WORK AT THE SOUTHEAST RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CONVOCATION**

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[47] We include in the supplementary volume a statement about Curriculum of Place prepared by Miles Bryant, one of our Research Associates, for School at the Center.

A pedagogy that involves people from different walks of life provides information about activities and interests that can become common. This work of creating community through shared experiences provides new ground on which students and adults can interact. The difference between student engagement that is common to typical school activities and that which is required when real community work is being accomplished is evident to educators involved in these activities. They begin to revisit the capacities of their students and the limitations that have been imposed on them through traditional school work. The involvement of students in community affairs as participating equals with adults is a strong indicator of the power of place-based pedagogy to expand the interconnections and community development in Rural Challenge sites.

When school work becomes visible beyond the school walls and is seen as contributing to or drawing upon resources in the community, community members develop a new view of what schools can be and how young people can be active participants, even leaders, in the community. An educator from the Yuba Watershed Alliance (which involves four separate communities in northeast California) describes the evolving relations and growing interconnectedness of students and community members growing out of the Rural Challenge work as follows:

> **We are setting up our community action teams [which grew out of community meetings of students and adults]. The action teams are groups of people concerned about certain kinds of things. One group focuses on young children, another on health, another on economic development, one on recreation and one on communication. We have a new one on seniors. Some are connected to the school and some aren't. Our theory is, though, that all affect the school. The seniors action group decided they wanted to help seniors work with the school as well as use the schools' facilities. They are doing great work with our kids and they are joining them for lunch occasionally. We've been trying to organize such a thing for years without success but now that it's their idea, it's working. Another new area is communication. We had a town hall meeting several years ago and someone said 'we don't have a community newspaper. We have 350 people that live in a 26 square mile area. How do we learn about local things?' They decided to start a newsletter and design it. They are drawing articles from every organization, formal and informal in the community. They write their own articles. The newsletter comes out monthly....[O]ur students have used the action teams when they want something done. They go to an adult and say 'Could you do this the next time you meet?' We're starting to realize that this is stupid. Let's get the students involved with the action teams, to become active participants. We now have kids showing up. We're going to work more on this.**

The teachers from the Yuba Watershed Alliance also articulated the natural extension of student leadership and initiative in community-based work:

> [W]e have begun to realize that we do a lot of things for our kids, inviting them to participate in a variety of activities. We realize now that that isn't what we really want to do. So now we are working on ways to turn things over to the kids. They need to run things, to make decisions. We have turned over the volleyball program in our communities and each group will decide where it goes, how they're going to set up the league, how they're going to manage the use of the school facilities. They will construct the court, everything. It's all up to them. Kids had a significant role in designing and implementing the plan for the CD project on place.[48] They had to make content and artistic decisions. We are trying hard to learn how not to encourage kids to take a back seat, waiting for adults to do things for them.[49]

LEARNING FROM RURAL CHALLENGE CONVOCATIONS

Yet another base for expanding the work connected to place through communication was the regional and national meetings of Rural Challenge participants. Overwhelmingly, participants credit the information exchange across sites at these gatherings with providing much of the necessary language and examples of practice to take home to enrich their own work. This information exchange occurred powerfully in the sharing of portfolios of student work as well as in the talk of how sites were struggling to assess the quality of their students' work through qualitative evaluations of products and exhibitions. Participants learned about the work of other sites in group forums, through gallery presentations, and through student presentations of place-based projects. The richness and sophistication of these products and presentations opened up possibilities that participants took home with them for their own site's development.

> "The biggest block is our imagination. The more I talk with other teachers at meetings like this, the more things open up. We do some camping and the art teacher goes to the cemetery for some rubbings on the headstones but those are not seen as big parts of the curriculum."
>
> TEACHER AT THE RENDEZVOUS, GRANBY, COLORADO

For sites that are just entering the Rural Challenge network, regional meetings have provided participants with articulated goals, invaluable concepts and practical suggestions to start their work at home. A participant from Kooskia, Idaho, Mary Beth Funk, stated:

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[48] The CD project is reported on in the supplementary volume.

[49] As we were writing this report, Vito Perrone had the occasion of meeting with a delegation of teachers from Finland. They had just completed visits to schools in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. Their first question was: "Why are your students so dependent? The teachers do everything. The students do almost nothing." This is the issue those in the Yuba Watershed Alliance wish to address. It is a condition that is naturally challenged as students engage a curriculum that is more locally focused and addresses things that matter in communities.

> We're trying to re-establish connections between the school and the community. We had lost sight of our work together....I came back from Granby last year prepared to read more about place and how to make place more important....I want to increase [our students'] value in their own eyes. I want to increase the value of the community in the kids' eyes—they don't seem to feel that their place is worth much. And I want to increase the community's value of the kids.

The participants established connections across sites at the regional and national meetings and began to feel less isolated, less "different" than the rest of the country. They began to see possibilities for expanding their own work at home and realized that the importance of the work of the Rural Challenge extends beyond their individual communities.

> "I found out Maine is not so different from Wisconsin."

> "The projects you are doing are long lasting, deep and rich—we've done a one-week unit. We've learned a lot from all of you. I've begun to expand my viewpoint. The ideas here (at Granby) are large."
>
> MONIE LUNDBERG, DEUEL SCHOOL DISTRICT, CLEAR LAKE, SOUTH DAKOTA

The power of sharing work that was learned at Granby came home with some of the participants and the local exchanges among students and teachers that followed have enriched place-based work within sites.

> We learned a lot at the first Granby event about the power of gallery displays. We now have an annual gathering of teachers, students, parents and community people from our four communities coming together to view work in the four sites. We have learned a lot from one another. Our students, who generally don't yet appreciate their towns as vibrant, distinctive places, are meeting students from other communities, who have similar concerns, but who help give a sense that their place is larger, more connected. We are trying to find more ways of connecting students in our four communities, beyond sports. One idea suggested to us by a community person was expanding our sports buses, providing other students opportunities to meet students in another setting to do joint work on computers, to share their research, to play chess. We're planning more video-conferencing as a way for students in all four sites to share their work with one another, to learn how others have planned dances or developed newsletters or done internships. The number of experts just keeps growing.
>
> ANN SLATTERY, NORTH COAST RURAL CHALLENGE NETWORK, POINT ARENA, CALIFORNIA

THE STRUCTURE AND CULTURE OF COMMUNITY

In some cases, constraints that block the deepening of student work that is real, active, community-based and locally responsive come from within the rural communities themselves. Sometimes the very viability of the community depends on a variety of basic needs. "People need housing, jobs, the necessities of life. Without this, the relationships we want are unlikely," suggested Chris Davis from PACERS, in Alabama. In communities that are struggling to survive, that are in danger of losing their local school to regionalization, the work of the Rural Challenge is most crucial, but in some respects, even more difficult to establish. The fire that needs attention immediately is not easily seen as the restructuring of schooling or closer school-community connections.

Yet, participants have noted that the work of place is deepest, most transformative, and at its best when schools and community forces join to tackle some of the most pressing issues facing them. In a Yuba Watershed Alliance community, for example, the change in welfare policy is forcing some people to move to settings where there are greater employment opportunities. The loss of young people in schools means fewer dollars, possibly the loss of teachers, perhaps even the loss of a school. The local economic action committee is trying to address the problem, looking at the possibility of establishing an organic produce co-op which would provide job opportunities as well as involve students. A similar situation in Howard, South Dakota has been described earlier. The action committee there learned from the students' economic analysis and considered adjusting their business and shopping practices to stop the drain of resources out of the community and county.

Another hurdle to engaging fully in place-based curriculum that some small rural sites face comes from a community culture that accepts a silencing of difficult issues. We heard from some

communities about tacit agreements to remain silent on potentially incendiary issues such as tobacco production or the use of pesticides, in others about silence surrounding alcohol and drug use among young people. The agreements may cover up the controversies relating to logging, strip mining and "factory" production of meat produce, while in still other places they make matters of race and class, past and present, taboo.

Many Rural Challenge educators and community advocates are engaging students in work that touches these areas of silence through historical research, water and soil sampling, environmental/economic analyses, newspaper reporting. The results of this investigative work can be discomforting. One participant commented that,

> **This gets to the question of where pedagogy of place gets dangerous because there are things that towns don't want to know. There is dirty laundry you don't want to have out there when you are discovering things about your community and that is one of the challenges in trying to get this idea across is people being open and honest about whether we really want kids to do a lot of water testing down by the factory....[T]here are situations where students are the eyes and ears that are feeding into legitimate research that is happening with other organizations outside of the school situation.**

Communication is the very problem that needs to be addressed when tacit agreement to remain silent on issues affects the health and well-being of communities. Some sites have had success in going public with difficult challenges by connecting student work with outside agencies that provide resources and advocacy for environmental and health issues. Lydia Harding-Elder, from Weldon, North Carolina, says:

> **[Y]ou have to find groups who need the data to link with on these controversial projects. Then the students interact with these groups in joint efforts. You also have to think about the big picture because when you are constantly under attack, how do you stop kids fighting for what they believe in? It is good to link with other organizations.**

When the issues become public and students engage in identifying problems as well as solutions, the work of place uncovers and corrects abuses. Race is a good example. Virtually every community lives with stories that are difficult to address. But by examining them seriously, some fresh beginnings can be made. The continued silence and all the expressions of victimization and guilt can hardly be healthy.[50] We see student engagement with such real and important issues as vitally important to the larger goals of the Rural Challenge—to enrich the life prospects of small rural communities so that they become desirous places for future generations to settle in.

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[50] We found considerable consciousness about matters of race in our various Regional Convocations. In several Appalachian sites, for example, students commented on how seldom they see an African American and students from the Mississippi delta described how few non-African Americans they see. In both cases, they wished for greater diversity.

EXTERNAL STANDARDIZING PRESSURES ON SCHOOLS

Alongside the internal pressures that restrict the expansion of a pedagogy of place, Rural Challenge teachers and project directors voiced their concerns about the impact state and national policies have in limiting the scope of their work. All areas of the country are affected by educational policies that are increasingly determining the content of schooling by placing unprecedented emphases on individual students and aggregate school outcomes on standardized tests. What is being tested generally is, by definition, what those external to schools believe should be learned by all students. Context, within such a system, is not seen as particularly important. The widely reported concerns over the "poor quality" of our schooling certainly fuel these various standardization efforts. They provide, as well, a hefty rationale for school and community naysayers reluctant to break out of the mold of teacher-directed, whole-class, age-graded, textbook-determined schooling. Thus, the increased national effort to standardize tests and curriculum tends to limit the expansion of collective local knowledge as a purpose of schooling and student-directed learning as pedagogy.

Educators in Rural Challenge sites across the country spoke about the pressure to meet externally imposed standards. Kristi Minor had this to say:

> We have curriculum pressure. I am a teacher's aide, but I hear grumbling a lot about 'How are we supposed to implement this program and still meet district [large county-wide] standards?' Many teachers feel pressed by the need to cover a lot of material in order to make sure students have the information needed for the tests.... [Teachers] get excited about [a project] and they think it meets the Rural Challenge goals but it doesn't meet state standards, and if they take this hunk of nine weeks to do this there is no way they are going to meet the state standards.

The specter of meeting standards by passing standardized tests looms large in many areas. In Kentucky, North Carolina, Texas and Alabama, for example, the stakes are extremely high for educators. And the stakes are growing elsewhere.

> In the state of North Carolina my school was one of the 15 schools which was declared 'low performing.' I had the State Assistance Team last year, and....they came in and collected data from all of the different groups. It was just my first year, but if I were a second-year principal, and based on that collection of the data, if there had been evidence that I was the reason why the test scores were low, I would have gone home for 90 days with pay and then before the State Board to prove that I was not the reason why the test scores were low. While the State Assistance Team was at my school, if there was any way they felt the superintendent or directors in the central office were blocking [progress], then they [would have gone] home too. We have only four schools in my system. If over 50 percent of the schools in my system are declared low performing, then the superintendent goes home. They don't have a job, but they have a right to appeal. So was there pressure? YES! The State Department dictates the curriculum and they say this is what you must do, but they did not address the parental involvement piece. They didn't see a need for that; it was not important to them. I knew there was no way in the world we were going to get the kids where they needed to be if we didn't get the parents involved. So my job was on the line every day.
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> They also said to our teachers, that if you were a teacher in that low-performing school and you had been at that school the year before, then you had to take a test. You had three chances at passing that test. If you didn't pass the test in mathematics, writing and reading, then your license would be revoked. A lot of my teachers left because if they went to another school they didn't have to worry about the test. The teachers

> **who stayed, because they really, really cared, felt like they were punished....Next year if you are declared a low-performing school but don't get an Assistance Team, every teacher in the school has to take that test.[51]**
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> **LYDIA HARDING-ELDER, PRINCIPAL, WELDON, NORTH CAROLINA**

At Packers Bend (Alabama), given the school's "alert" status, the principal made "increasing test scores" the singular purpose for the work of students and teachers. There was to be no community-oriented work, such as work on the community newspaper, during the school day. The test curriculum was everything. We met many people in schools who feared such a fate for their schools as their states move to high-stakes testing.

In some settings, there is a need to help teachers understand that attention to the place, most often longer-term projects that are more exploratory, in which students make many decisions about the particular aspect of an inquiry to focus on, doesn't necessarily mean that the various curricular frameworks and standards imposed by states can't be addressed. To help teachers make connections to this particular issue, the Llano Grande Project (Edcouch-Elsa, Texas) provided a summer professional development experience for 30 south Texas teachers to assist them in incorporating art activities into the regular curriculum, using materials available to them in the local area, as well as working out ways to tie TAAS goals (state guidelines) to studies around local history. This latter curricular work extended across the disciplines by linking local history to all subjects; for example, it outlined how English teachers could meet state guidelines by having students write up an oral history project. The alignment of TAAS objectives with materials being developed by students and community members engaged in local history work is being made available to all teachers in the area. The resulting guide is expected to support widespread integration and permanence of this work in the area schools.[52]

Nevertheless, participants who described the kinds of tests that their students are facing were not optimistic about their impact on teaching and learning, not to mention on student performance.

> **My Independent Living [course] has 25 competencies with 4 to 5 subcompetencies within each one and there are 10 to 20 questions on each competency. They are all multiple choice. In Kentucky we have open-ended response questions. It is a 4-day test. Our teachers prepare weeks in advance for each subject. [We allow] 2 weeks for each subject, time off from learning just to teach the test. This is what they are looking for during the test. For the English part, they are all brushing up on dotting their i's and crossing their t's and punctuation**

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[51] In the current environment, many states are developing policies to reconstitute schools that have low test scores for two or three years. The pressures in these settings to focus on the test curriculum are large. There are some Rural Challenge schools, mostly in the southeast, that have been placed on "alert" status for low test scores. These schools still report high graduation rates and higher than average college going rates. They also tend to be among the poorest communities in these states, lacking in vital educational resources.

[52] Many projects are taking time to consider ways of connecting locally based projects to their respective state's curricular guidelines and testing formats. While this appears to be necessary, it is a direction that clearly places limits on what is possible. In the long run, it is likely to be deleterious. It removes too much local decision-making and gives the status quo, schools as they have always been, the upper hand. We agree with School at the Center in its stance (outlined in its 1998 annual report, pp. 15–16): "We think the standards movement is one of centricity, and can do serious harm to the kind of work or curricular movement we seek to create in Nebraska. State standards are likely to result in curriculum mediocrity which comes from a process that seeks to regress all to a mean, and moves the focus of learning further away from the community. Philosophically, School at the Center focuses on divergence, not convergence, which is evidenced in our lack of curricular prescription to teachers. Our lesson is that we must do a better job of documenting student learning of place, teaching to place, and the relationship of schooling to community vitality. Further, we must use a variety of media to document this work and to communicate its substance to a broader public audience. It requires us to identify or characterize the qualities of student performance in rural community schools where the curricula is localized, and to submit for public discussion these qualities as local standards relevant to the notions of a more integrated global society. If we cannot do this, then we will have fallen short of our own expectations."

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> and grammar. You go to science and they are touching on all the basic science techniques that may be used. Then you get distinguished, apprentice, novice....It is so important to do well on the tests because in Kentucky the state can come in and if your scores are low enough, they can consider you in crisis and take over.

"If you don't stop and teach the test, then your scores are going to be bad....If you don't take time off to teach the test, your kids fail."

ED TURNER, TEACHER, HILLSBOROUGH, NORTH CAROLINA

Participants shared numerous stories of how poorly the tests functioned as either measures of knowledge or potential learning tools. Rhonda Rhodes, a teacher from Hiwassee Dam, North Carolina, part of the Tenn-Ga-Lina Rural Challenge Project, noted:

> One of the questions related to my family and child relationships course was: 'It's a good idea to give your child a nap after dinner.' It was a yes or no kind of question. And the kid I was working with said yes, you should give your child a nap after dinner. Dinner to him was the noon meal, it was not the 6:00 meal. Of course he was wrong, but he was right. So the language doesn't fit all of the areas because of the way we speak in North Carolina....You would never know if you hadn't gone back [to look at] that specific question. You just get the test results back and they were low.

A Texas educator, Elmira Cura, described to us the detrimental effects these high stakes tests have on students.

> It is sad when a student has gone through 12 years of school and can't graduate because he can't pass the standardized test. Our high school is 10 years old and since TAAS started we now have one, two, three students who won't graduate because they didn't pass the test. They are at risk because they are migrants. They have to take off and join their parents in the fields in Michigan and can't be there for the last test.

"We have to work to the objectives on the test, yes, the pressure of the TAAS. The kids are pressured, parents and teachers are pressured."

Rural Challenge participants, by and large, accept the mandate to be accountable, but few believe that the current system of standardized testing provides any valid indication of quality. They ask, "Are the schools creating people who are good workers? Are the schools creating people who think?" Most argue that "the tests don't measure [such things]." Those who have ventured out of state-mandated curricula, that have sought to get their students into genuine work in the community, have wanted their students to work as real historians, scientists, poets and the like, that have witnessed increasingly higher-quality work from their students, are beginning to see place-based work as central and test-related curriculum as more supplemental. This work is still so new, however, that few know whether it will affect test scores one way or another.[55]

Many who spoke to us about countering the negative effects of standardization indicated that they needed to establish ways of assessing the quality of student projects and products that would assure community members as well as policy makers that students engaged in real work connected to place were demonstrating critical thinking, understanding and success. As Ginny Jaramillo, from the Colorado Rural Charter School Network, noted: "We don't have a set evaluation system right now. We use student enthusiasm, how they feel about a project and if it is something they are interested in, it is going to work....We don't have any fully developed criteria."

Charter schools in Colorado enjoy a certain degree of flexibility but they have had to organize in order to influence the way standards are being expressed and evaluated. Their basic position is that without changes in policy, the work they most want to accomplish would not be valued. Jaramillo told us:

> The standards are fine but if that is all you have, you are never going to develop community-based schools because there is nothing in the standards about community-based education. The standards have to be much broader, so our evaluation system has to be some kind of peer review where you develop relationships of support for how you assess this. If this kind of education is not a part of the accountability system, it won't last. We can do all these things, but if we keep feeding into the same system all the time, the education we value, is squashed.

She went on to explain how she and her colleagues in the Charter School network are influencing policy:

> One of the things that we were real aware of was that the state is coming up with a Charter School accountability system. We are strong enough now in the Charter League in the state and we decided that we would tell the state how our accountability should work. We started our own accountability system and began doing peer review just among our schools. We did that the first year, one site going to another site and just feeling our way through. The second year we modified and improved it and we involved Colorado State School Board members and CDE officials and created a real dialogue. We now have a real important exchange of information going between the State Board of Education, the Colorado Department of Education, and the Colorado League of Charter Schools. I serve on the League Board and we are now supposed to have that accountability system ready for September, but it is impacted dramatically by what our five little rural schools have been doing because we were the only ones with a model. We said that it has to be a team that develops a relationship with the visiting school that is long-standing for at least five years, and they agreed. We were afraid that someone couldn't come in and see a multi-age, interdisciplinary, service learning, community-based school and even begin to understand how that translates into test scores. The urban charter schools looked at us and said, 'Well, aren't you just like us?' 'No.' We made that real clear.

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[55] Our long experience with standardized testing leads us to believe that inquiry-oriented, more open-ended work in schools has little impact on test scores.

In the long run, Rural Challenge networks may have to develop mechanisms for accountability that keep central the work around place, the commitments to genuine community-school integration. Given a solid effort, they might find their way to waivers from their respective states that enable them to do the good work they want to do, while being even more accountable. Nevertheless, the work of combining place-based work with standards from outside authorities remains arduous, more so in some discipline areas than others. The Kickapoo River Institute (in Wisconsin), like the Minnesota New Country School, for example, is beginning to worry about how to deal with upper-level math as well as world languages. Integrating those fields into the place-based curriculum that has students outside of school facilities 120 days a year currently seems daunting. The plan is to do the upper-level math, which Jim Lewicki, the Kickapoo director, describes as "more abstract," in a fairly traditional manner, making use of a textbook and related exercises. It is possible that math could be learned in settings outside a formal classroom but given the understanding that calculus is an important *course* for college entry, the pressures to engage such a course formally and traditionally are large.

As we have already mentioned, Rural Challenge educators are concerned with developing ways to assess what they feel are important aspects of student work and present it to parents, community members, governance bodies, and institutions of higher education. But, will the more removed constituencies take the time to review student portfolios, be interested in student products and see these as better indicators of student knowledge, understanding and skill than a score on a test? These are reasonable concerns.

DISTRICT AND STATE GOVERNANCE

Many Rural Challenge participants have made clear to us that policy making by bureaucrats at the local and state level impedes their efforts to deepen a pedagogy of place in their schools. A Rural Challenge participant at the 1998 Rendezvous raised questions about local school governing bodies.

> Who is [the governing board] responsible to? Who are the primary stakeholders? If they are considered the taxpayers and not the children, then we run into some problems and that is where boards get so confused. You can't serve both groups at the same time unless you figure out a way to serve the children and educate the taxpayers about how those children are being served. But if the board just says, 'Oh, the taxpayers tell us what to do, so we are not going to pay any attention to what really works, we are just going to do it because the taxpayers said it and they are our primary stakeholders. [Then, good work might not be acknowledged.]

Many Rural Challenge educators are getting involved in policy making in order to assure that mandated standards include their orientation to place. In Minnesota, for example, advocates got a requirement that students understand their local settings through academic studies and community service internships into the state standards. The Rural Challenge has also issued a policy statement on standards that calls for all states to consider local circumstances in their standards documents.[54]

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[54] The Rural Challenge document on Standards is available from the Rural Challenge Policy Office, PO Box 68, Randolph, Vermont 05060. Understanding that rural schools and communities face many deleterious policies related to consolidation, finance, mandates around size and curriculum, the Policy Program is engaged in a number of related studies and educational forums that involve policy matters, particularly at the state level.

This acknowledgment of the ideological distance and differing interests between governance bodies and Rural Challenge activists was raised again and again by participants, in particular in settings in which governing boards are at the county level or beyond a local community. The lack of representation in policy decision-making was reported by a participant from Idalia, Colorado, as follows:

> The Rural Challenge grant we received was $19,000, so this year the district cut back our funding by $19,000! That means the Rural Challenge money has to go to support basic expenses or the teachers and parents start to sabotage the programs. Our local board members can't fight for reinstatement of the $19,000 because there are only two out of seven representatives on the board. The rest are from Ray, the closest large town. School Board representation is based on student population, so Idalia will never have more than one or two representatives. When we want to pass something that will benefit our school, we have to negotiate with representatives from Ray to vote with us, otherwise our voices are fairly silent.

Olga Pestrikoff, from Alaska, had a similar story:

> Kodiak Island is in a borough, not a county. We have a five member School Board in Kodiak City, not one of which is from a rural area. One of our goals is to increase the number of board members to seven and give at least one new member to the rural villages.

In some sites, the involvement of the community within the school seems natural and has been a force to overcome some of the constraints described above. Native schools in Alaska and New Mexico, for example, have high levels of community involvement because community members consider the content and organization of schooling to be their responsibility rather than that of a distant, anonymous bureaucracy. An Alaskan participant noted that "when there is trouble at the school the teachers go to the elders in the community meeting. The parents and teachers run the school." Olga Pestrikoff communicated this sense of community ownership of the school as she described how things operate in her village school:

> The school report card template comes from the borough school district and then each principal has the autonomy to adjust that to meet the community's needs. That happens with the input from the community—what do we think are the most important things our children should be working on in school? So parents get a chance to speak to that. The principals make the decisions with the community along with the teachers and the student representatives. We have done this for two years. Our village criteria were much more useful to us than the state standards by themselves. The parents feel that if the kids are liking being in school, if they are doing good, if it is a positive climate, then that is what they are going to work on. They want their kids to be happy. Not all of them are, of course, but generally it is pretty positive....

Chuck Ericksen, director of New Paradigm Partners, in Wisconsin, after describing how community members have become vital, shared the following story which also describes a change in school-community relationships:

> A few years ago some administrators came through who didn't understand the ways we do business. Teachers and community people tried to tell them, we don't do it that way now. The previous superintendent said he would like to "get it" but hasn't done business that way before and it feels foreign to have to change. Ultimately he alienated too many people and the school board took his keys away and paid him to stay home for a year. The district did fine without him. Another principal said to kids, "I could be talking to good kids." We told him that is not how we do business here, and he finally left.

As described by Ginny Jaramillo, Battle Rock, in Colorado, has relied on Rural Challenge support to carry on important heritage-based work that was threatened by a reduced budget, again finding ways around constraints:

> Battle Rock was kind of our first example…of mentorship programs. Stephen found some archaeologists and paleontologists and Sonja, the artist…. When the school lost its enrollment, the budget wasn't there for Sonja to be part of the staff, but Stephen used some Rural Challenge funds to keep her involved in the mentorship program. The children have won art awards everywhere; a second grader won the Cherry Creek arts festival award for children and the school won the Utah arts award and a Navajo arts award. The Hovenweep population is right next door and Sonja had worked with the Hovenweep kids and brought them to school and the Battle Rock kids have gone to Hovenweep and they have some very talented American Indian artists at that school.

"I think the unique thing about the survival of Indian communities is its land base. I think just the fact that we have, you would say, a clearer delineation that this is Indian land, that allows us—just that geographic and political delineation—allows our culture and traditions to survive."

FRED SOLOMON, LAGUNA, NEW MEXICO

■ ENSURING OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND AND DEVELOP RURAL CHALLENGE WORK

The challenge of deepening the work involved in a pedagogy of place is foremost in the minds of educators who have had successes in instituting a different approach to schooling through the Rural Challenge. They want to create authentic learning experiences for students which require them to direct their own learning rather than have teachers guide them each step of the way. They want to ensure that the work is complex, important, related to capacities that are required of productive adults, preparing students for higher education, and generating knowledge and curiosity about the world and the place of their community in it. We all acknowledge that they have a long and ambitious road ahead of them.

The small size of rural communities and schools would seem to facilitate the kind of communication and interconnectedness that is necessary to implement a pedagogy of place. Yet size, in and of itself, is not enough to ensure the conditions necessary to deepen and sustain this work. Internal pressures from schooling practices and community attitudes that support school as usual are pervasive. Larger possibilities cannot be realized without concerted efforts to counteract the structural and cultural impediments to allowing schools and communities to function in new ways. Moreover, a strong commitment to place-based work at the local level is essential to advocate for supportive circumstances at higher levels of school governance.

What, then, do people in schools and communities need in order to expand their Rural Challenge work and sustain it beyond the current funding cycle? In their own words, they need a language describing what they are doing that is better understood, better communication locally as well as regionally and nationally, an expansion of their knowledge base, better ways of assessing the quality of the work being done by students that can be disseminated and understood easily, and more involvement of teacher educators in pedagogy of place work. Through these accomplishments it is hoped that there will be a wider commitment and belief in what the Rural Challenge is doing and more teachers, community members, and policy makers willing to work at a revitalization of schools and communities. On a more practical plane, Rural Challenge participants acknowledge that they need to develop a diverse portfolio of funding that is both regionally and community-based in order to sustain and expand their work beyond the Rural Challenge grant.

And what do people in schools and communities need from governance bodies and educational policy makers in order to sustain and expand their growth? They need more encouraging state education policies. They need to be more secure about financial support from the state. They must know that their size is not going to lead to closure or more consolidation. They must know that there is room for local standards to be developed, for local forms of accountability to be valued. They need opportunities for interchange with others, to learn with and from others. In addition, the Rural Challenge needs to articulate more fully and comprehensibly its larger purposes related to present and future goals in order to provide a solid scaffold for the local work.[55]

The larger purposes of the Rural Challenge work are constant beacons that guide the work at the sites. Work of this nature is never "done" since the process of moving toward the large purposes is often more critical than a resulting product. Witnessing the growth and expansion of place-based work from add-on projects to a more fully integrated curriculum of place to the creation of venues where community is created infuses the participants with motivation and pride. "It's only been two years," remarked a teacher at the South Dakota Regional Convocation. "I have to keep reminding myself of that. And I've seen a lot of changes already that I could never have thought possible. That encourages me, even as we're not where we could be or want to be. Hopefully, that's one of the sustainable things that we're going to see from Annenberg."

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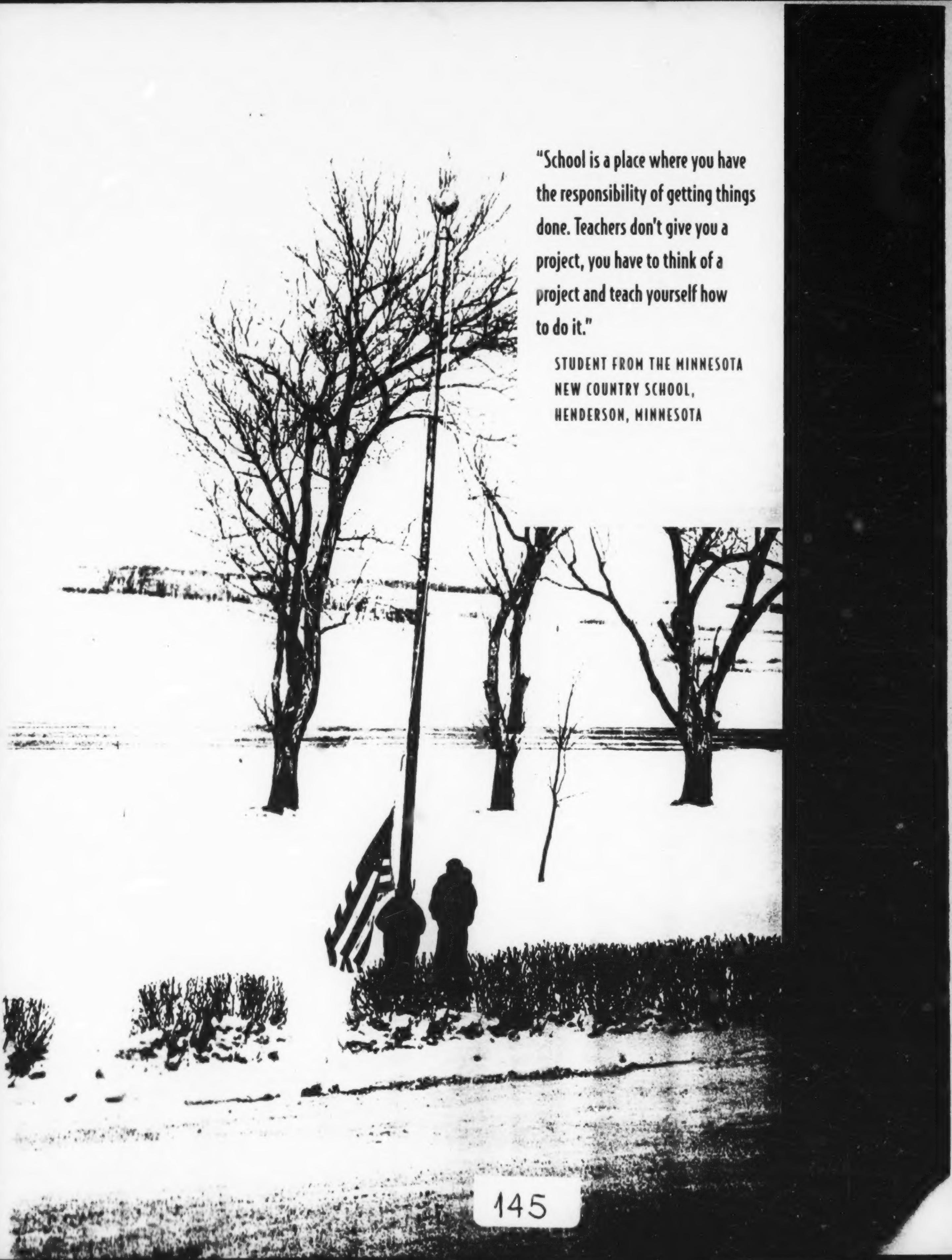
55. The Rural Challenge Board has begun to speak of the "New" Rural Challenge, the activity meant to continue long beyond Annenberg support. Within this construct, there is more talk of "systemic reform." This needs better language, understood as a natural extension of work already begun.



"School is a place where you have the responsibility of getting things done. Teachers don't give you a project, you have to think of a project and teach yourself how to do it."

STUDENT FROM THE MINNESOTA
NEW COUNTRY SCHOOL,
HENDERSON, MINNESOTA

Closing Reflections

IN THIS CLOSING STATEMENT, we share some of our reflections on the year's work around students, communities and an education of place. We do so understanding that we have presented an expansive view of the Rural Challenge as it is being carried out in large numbers of schools and communities. While much about these rural schools can be compared easily to urban and suburban schools, especially in their adherence to Carnegie Units and the ways they structure the school day and year, their size and scale tend to make them very different as well.[56] Because most of the schools are relatively small, for example, the level of personalization is high. Teachers and students know one another well. In these small schools, virtually all the students have a sense they are needed.

One might ask why these schools are embarking on such a long and arduous road of transforming the typical, ostensibly successful ways of conducting school. Working against this grain is clearly complicated. School as usual doesn't take so much effort. It seems clear, though, that participants in the Rural Challenge are striving to make their schools more than just "above average" on some national report card. Increasing numbers are beginning, in fact, to see their schools as places where students can do more complex and meaningful work than is considered the norm. They are beginning to understand more fully that the work a pedagogy of place tends to support benefits both students and teachers by making their collective work engaging, real and important to the community.

Teachers are increasingly undertaking work that is complex, challenging, filled with student choice and decision-making. It is work that culminates in public presentations or utilization of the work and, therefore, is genuinely preparatory for real life work. Moreover, they are beginning to see their schools as necessary sites for building community through a sense of interdependence, situated both in the present, among all constituencies, and historically, linking past, present, and future stories, knowledge bases, and engagement. They speak more of wanting to create more desirable and sustainable living conditions.

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[56] We make a great deal out of size, though we recognize that size in and of itself is not enough to guarantee high quality education. We believe, however, that it is an important condition for enhancing the achievement of students. (See Cotton, K., "School Size, School Climate and Student Performance," *Close Up*, #20, Portland, Oregon: Northwest Educational Laboratory, 1996.)

Schools in the Rural Challenge networks and clusters are also more ready to define a powerful education around relationships, citizenship in relation to local needs, commitments to large social goals, powerful habits of mind, dispositions that support a critical stance in the world, such as a desire to learn, being a reader and writer and ongoing inquirer, having concerns about social justice, about democracy. It is exciting to be in settings in which teachers and students, increasingly joined by community people, articulate such powerful purposes. In this regard, the schools and their communities are not only striving to survive by offering possibilities of rich community-engaged lives, they are striving to reclaim educational goals that have been neglected or lost in the current climate of externally defined standards which too often promotes a standardized, broadly conceived but mostly superficial treatment of traditional subject matters. There is genuine interest in enlarging their potential for helping young people be in a position "to change the world," to use a Piagetian formulation.[57]

This road to a reconstruction of schooling in these more meaningful ways is, as we have already suggested, long and difficult. It is not surprising to us, therefore, that the general implementation of a pedagogy of place in Rural Challenge sites is often an add-on or single course project within a typical structure of school.

We have commented on how difficult it is to break the long-standing traditions of schools, the constancies. Teachers everywhere are quick to note the expectations of colleges around particular courses, labeled in very traditional terms.[58] They worry, in particular, about mathematics and science and the coverage expectations around the SAT and ACT, which most colleges require for admission. Even as they note almost universally that the Rural Challenge work makes school "more interesting for students and themselves," they aren't ready in most settings to transform a large portion of the school day into authentic, pedagogy of place work.[59] Nevertheless, the modes of engagement that project-based pedagogy of place work has generated seems to be percolating throughout the schools. There are more engaged teachers this year than last year. And as one principal commented, "more of my teachers are now asking for tables and chairs instead of desks." For him, this represents a sign of real change.

While locally rooted, activity-oriented, project-based work is occurring across the curriculum, it is, at this time in the Rural Challenge's evolution, finding a home more easily in the applied classes—computers, environmental science, agriculture, home economics, business—or in history or English where students engage often in technical, persuasive and informative writing about local historical issues. Even in the core subjects that lend themselves readily to place-based projects, however, the pressure to cover the standardized test-determined curriculum often limits this work to confined periods of time.

Nevertheless, the impact of the Rural Challenge work has been profound in many cases. Almost everywhere, participants note that since the introduction of the Rural Challenge and learning that

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[57] We understand that we have moved some of the language to a large level. We do so, in part, to honor the expressions of large hopes we heard from various Rural Challenge participants. We also wanted to acknowledge how much richer the language of participants is now about the meaning of their work. This is a significant advance from a year ago.

[58] Joe Nathan, with the Center for School Change, the large Rural Challenge network in Minnesota, has carried on for several years a battle with the NCAA which has routinely not accepted for purposes of athletic eligibility in member colleges and universities many field-based, project-oriented courses that don't have traditional titles—such as American History, World Literature, Chemistry, Geometry. We are pleased to report, however, that he is making progress and his work is being given support by increasing numbers of Rural Challenge schools and communities.

[59] At all our Regional Convocations, participants talked about college-university expectations as an obstacle to doing more "Rural Challenge" work in the schools. More interaction with colleges along the lines of the negotiations established by the Coalition of Essential Schools could be useful. Such discussions also need to take place with State Departments of Education.

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relates to the life of their communities, students are more engaged in their schooling, value more their communities and their places in them, feel pride in their accomplishments and become more involved citizens in school and the community at large. The range of comments attesting to these outcomes includes this statement from a Willow Lake, South Dakota participant: "We have noticed the personal growth in the students who put time and effort into projects. They don't trash the things they do, and are very willing to tell others about what they are doing."

Students claim that when they work on projects introduced as a result of Rural Challenge work that, "Our school prepares us for real life." Their response to the work they initiate is positive. They describe it as work that matters to them, as something they will remember long past all the tests. They also have come to see their communities as a rich resource for learning and to understand and appreciate where they live and the people they live near. Community members with traditional skills or native knowledge are finding their way more easily into schools and, as a result, this traditional knowledge is being valued and passed on. After a community project day in Idalia, Colorado, one student exclaimed, "Wow, I didn't know there were all these cool people here." A teacher from Idalia noted that this appreciation goes in two directions, "All the work students are doing in the community has taught some of the older people how cool the kids are." This is an extremely important outcome of this work when one considers that in many of the sites, high school students alone make up a sizable portion of the total population of the community. Bringing them into the life of the community would seem essential.

A Crete, Nebraska teacher recounted the work of formerly "at risk" students in his school who are building and servicing computers for local residents. They have secured, as well, a contract to build and service computers for the local hospital. He noted how respected these students have become: "They have gained poise, self-confidence and credibility." This is a particularly positive outcome.

Technology is not the only area in which students are demonstrating leadership. In many sites, students produce the town newspaper that informs residents of what is happening around the community. In various PACERS sites in Alabama, for example, student-produced community newspapers are now read, as we noted earlier, by some 250,000 rural residents. Through environmental work, students in many sites have linked the community with outside organizations that promote safer and healthier living conditions. Because of the work of students, many communities have safer drinking water. In some sites they have joined with community action groups to introduce new businesses or resuscitate a dragging local commercial economy.

As the school curriculum becomes engaged in real community issues—environmental matters, concerns about loss of population, housing, health issues, limited tax resources, library services and employment—and rural schools and communities consider these issues together, citizenship is extended, care for one's place assumes a higher priority, and the potential for optimism about the future enlarges.

"Our kids used to say that they are doing everything they can to get out of here, to a better place. That's changed."

The general tendency in rural communities is to help students consider a wide range of opportunities, but most involve going away to school, which often means leaving the community for good. Some come back, but that is not typical. However, as teachers begin to pursue more what is local—

helping students come to understand that there are poets and painters, independent ranchers, people who do their work via various interactive technologies, travel, do design work, maintain a variety of businesses and that their towns have a history with unique qualities with people who in their own ways have done extraordinary things—students are beginning to think about their local areas differently. The place is beginning to matter more. It is more than a small town, far away, having limited resources. Young people may still go to an urban setting to live and work, but they will more likely do so with a greater sense of pride about where they grew up. They will come to understand that important values exist in their communities. They may well take much of that place with them wherever they go. Some may even find their way back with fresh perspectives, new ways of making a living, ideas about how to make a contribution to the place.

"Education of place is not about being isolated but about knowing one's self and origin in order to better relate to people in other places."

The impact of greater attention to place, as we have noted, differs across the sites in terms of its depth and the extent to which it contributes to what counts as school. Across all sites, however, the work that a pedagogy of place supports benefits both students and teachers in schools by making what they do engaging, real, important to the community, and meaningful in a way that typical school has not been.

The future of Rural Challenge work looks towards deepening what has begun in sites across the country. By this we mean not only incorporating place in ever-expanding venues within schools and communities, but increasing its complexity both intellectually and pragmatically, expanding its impact on the lives of students and community members, and enhancing the quality of life more generally. We have devoted considerable space in this document to illustrate how various sites have undertaken this work in order to provide a forum for discussion and a display of practices that can be useful examples to those interested in developing and deepening place-based work in their local areas. We have discussed the pressures that sites are experiencing as they implement and expand this work and have shared ways individual sites have sought opportunities to work against the local and external constraints they encounter.

What clearly emerges from our work in researching and evaluating the Rural Challenge effort is that the dramatic change in schooling that can result when the work of place is deep, real, complex and extensive within the school day requires a concomitant change in the roles of teachers and students. In gatherings of project directors, researchers and evaluators, we asked how prepared teachers are for taking on new roles that are required for this place-related work. "Not very well," was the general answer. Habits of traditional schooling run deep in teachers' experiences and are seldom challenged in either their preparation programs or in their daily lives in schools. It is not our purpose to propose specific recommendations here, but we can underscore the importance of teachers learning to let go of the control they exert over student work and choices. Students engaged in Rural Challenge work at its best have learned to be self-directed learners, certainly a prized, longed-for achievement of students anywhere. Students are supported in this, however, only when teachers withdraw from rigidly controlling the flow of activity engaging students. In open-ended complex work that is inquiry-based, real and public, teachers are often required to step back because they no longer unilaterally control the knowledge base or the time and place of the work. This can be new territory.[60]

We believe that the impact of this work can be seen in the lives of the participants, but we also believe that it could have a much larger impact if policy makers, educators, politicians, voters, and parents across the country recognized the opportunities for school renewal that are possible when engagement and decision-making are firmly placed at the local level of school and community. In only two years of effort to implement an education that is responsive to place, local concerns and traditions, wide-ranging talents and expertise, we have witnessed large-scale growth, in depth as well as breadth, of a progressive, democratic and, in quite a few sites, an altered way of conducting school. Boundaries that seemed barriers between young people and town elders, school work and community work, are being whittled away, creating a new interdependence around common pursuits. This new awareness and commitment of a larger body of rural residents has become, in the most significant sense, the site of community and changed its connotation from a group of people inhabiting the same area to an interdependent, collective of citizens from numerous walks of life who engage with each other and with external bodies to enhance the lives lived in their communities. The lessons we are learning here are important to a far wider segment of the population than the networks of rural communities that are currently creating the maps of this work. We are beginning to see that this work, begun as interventions in schooling, readily becomes one with community development when it takes root. The original source of the intervention is less important than the pragmatic changes felt by widespread audiences that are affected in multiple ways.[61]

It was made clear to us at our various Rural Challenge Convocations, through discussions and displays of work going on around the country, that the work takes on a particularly transformative character when several things coincide: when there is a critical mass of teachers and students empowered by this work seeking ways to expand it within the structure and culture of schooling; when community members feel comfortable and accustomed to interaction with school children, their learning and their potential for engaging in real work for the benefit of the community; and, perhaps most importantly, when engagement and action of the collective addresses real issues facing the community. When students step into the arena of community improvement in an active and responsible manner, sometimes even providing the necessary leadership for new work, communities engage in building, strengthening, enriching the quality of life in their rural areas. We see the work of the Rural Challenge as producing particularly interesting, important public engagement on a widespread basis. In an historic moment of growing alienation, isolation, self-interest, and material consumption as hallmarks of our North American culture, the lessons of Rural Challenge work that focuses on place and on a collective effort to reconstitute viable communities of people inhabiting that place are illuminating, offering an experience that is too often elusive to too many citizens of rural, urban and suburban America. The community building that is the outcome of some of the best efforts of Rural Challenge work can provide a powerful answer to the demise of public-spirited virtue and disinterest in our collective welfare.

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[60] We do not imply here minimal involvement of teachers. The good work we have described demands high levels of teacher involvement and commitment, resourcefulness around materials, good questions, careful planning, high standards.

[61] We have often been asked, is the work you are describing good education *only* for rural places? We believe the productive work we have described is, in fact, *good education*. We believe urban schools would do well to model their practices around what we are seeing in rural settings.

The work of place engages students in activities that serve the community, increases their knowledge about and, as a result, pride in the place they call home, makes their work and their worth visible to the community in a way that was not present when schools and community spheres were bounded and non-intersecting. As a result of the reciprocal appreciation that is growing in Rural Challenge communities, there is also a coming together of local citizens across age and activity boundaries to address the issues that tend to erode the quality of community life.

Whether or not the current work and its expected enlargement will translate into stability and longevity for Rural Challenge communities, making them desirable places for younger generations to settle in or return to is not known. The experience of democratic engagement around complex issues related to the quality of life is, however, enriching multiple layers of community life in the here and now. If and as these young people move to other contexts, the hope is that they will bring with them not only a pride of place but experiences and abilities to create community wherever they are, through invested, democratic participation in place-based issues.

What is clear is that a solid foundation is being constructed. Our challenge over the next year and a half is to document and report on how and whether the work deepens. This becomes especially important as several sites end their Rural Challenge funding cycles in June 1999. Will this mean that their efforts to create a more powerful, place-rooted education will end? Or will they continue to extend, deepen their practices?

As we think about deepening the work, will it become more systemic? Will an ever larger number of teachers become involved in community-based, project-oriented work? Will there be an ever larger commitment to greater intensity academically, with a view that students need to be fully engaged in historical, scientific, technological, literary, mathematical and artistic work and not just learning about these fields? We have been involved in too many reform efforts to believe that good beginnings necessarily translate into long-term commitments and change.

Finally, we want to acknowledge how we have changed through the work we are doing. Not all of us were convinced that so much good work would actually emerge. We have all come, however, to value more the possibilities of small schools and communities. We have been truly inspired by the teachers, school administrators, students, parents and community people we have met in rural settings across the country. Their energy, enthusiasm, intellectual power and commitment to an education of consequence is so much larger than the news accounts and expectations that surround them. While we know that much needs to be done, that the work is not universally good enough, we are more optimistic about the possibilities than we were two years ago.

Appendix A: Evaluation Plan

THE CONTEXT: RURAL SCHOOLS IN AMERICA

The Rural Challenge comes at a time of considerable vulnerability for rural schools and communities. New legislative and social pressures are being placed on *rural schools* to be more and more comprehensive and sadly, the resulting message to *students* in *rural communities* is to "understand that their futures rest somewhere else, in the metropolitan centers of their states or the nation." Moreover, state educational policies increasingly favor larger schools and communities, espousing standards which reflect global over local interests.

The Rural Challenge — is indeed — a challenge to such conventions. It begins with a premise that rural schools can be educationally powerful centers of communities, focusing attention on local historical, social and economic matters, which consequently help young people see in their surroundings possibilities, not simply liabilities, and can provide them a vision of an engaging, richly textured human story.

Embedded in the Rural Challenge is the belief that such an educational premise, carried out in practice, can inspire greater vitality in rural schools and communities. Further, this belief suggests that rural schools can become a beacon for defining educational practices more broadly, helping to establish a more favorable climate of reform in *all* schools by providing constructive models for change.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

This four year longitudinal evaluation will provide formative and summative information about the Annenberg Rural Challenge for several different audiences. In its design, it draws upon multiple perspectives — utilizing and linking researchers, practitioners and community members.

This evaluation will document what is being done in Rural Challenge schools, their related networks and programs, while assessing whether the goals of the Rural Challenge are being achieved. Perhaps most importantly, it will provide explanations for documented activities in schools through the *stories* of rural people and their learning environments. We believe that these stories provide vital information and helpful insights for the larger school reform effort.

Providing an historical context for the Annenberg Rural Challenge is essential. Instrumental to this end is an examination of the Country Life Movement which aimed at efforts of reform and economic recovery in the early part of the twentieth century. Understanding those early efforts and values will enable us to tell a richer, more useful story — one that speaks more directly to local activism on behalf of rural communities and schools.

THE ANNENBERG RURAL CHALLENGE: THEMES, GOALS, AND DEFINITIONS

The Annenberg Rural Challenge research and evaluation plan is guided by a set of themes, principles and goals, based on definitions for "genuinely good schools serving and served by rural communities."

THEMES AND PRINCIPLES

- Schools can be centers for both economic and social revitalization of rural environments, consequently contributing to increasingly sustainable communities;
- Curriculum is more effective when reflective of local culture and environments, designed around a Pedagogy of Place;
- Students in rural environments are citizens of their communities and have genuine choices after high school for higher education and/or employment in meaningful work in their local areas and beyond.

THE GOALS OF THE ANNENBERG RURAL CHALLENGE ARE TO SUPPORT AND TO CREATE:

1. a powerful and sustainable rural school movement that actively involves families, communities and the broader public, as well as educational professionals;
2. the greatest number and widest distribution of genuinely good rural schools (see definition below) in reciprocal relationships with their communities and their local environments;
3. political, policy and public environments that will enable rural schools to survive and thrive; and
4. an effective combination of documentation and evaluation methods to ensure rich and reliable ways of knowing what has succeeded, what has not, and why.

DEFINITIONS: WHAT ARE "GENUINELY GOOD SCHOOLS SERVING AND SERVED BY RURAL COMMUNITIES?"

Characteristics of rural schools include community interactions, smallness and a relative lack of bureaucracy. Genuinely good schools serving and served by rural communities demonstrate three principal qualities:

1. they are in reciprocal relationships with their communities, recognizing their interdependence and their larger educational purposes;
2. they are developing a pedagogy of place; and
3. they are accepting responsibility to be bi-cultural institutions, allowing students to succeed in different environments, both rural and urban.

THE ANNENBERG RURAL CHALLENGE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION DESIGN

The Annenberg Rural Challenge is committed to making the foregoing themes, goals and principles live in practice. This research and evaluation plan must account for such a proposed end. The design, developed around a theory of action rooted in place, matches the inspiring purposes of the Annenberg Rural Challenge.

The research and evaluation work will focus on portraying informative stories of people in selected sites and at the school, project, and network level. Data from selected sites will draw heavily on the stories of people's work in the rural settings of the Rural Challenge. Data collected from selected Networks and their participating schools will include samples of work produced by teachers and students, along with focused observations, photographs, interviews and surveys of parents, community members, and teachers (see Figure 1).

To document and assess the activities of the Rural Challenge sites, periodic surveys will be administered in schools and within communities and community-school data will be collected. Interviews of network and community coordinators will provide a context, both state and local, for understanding the complexity of issues involved in rural schooling.

Annual Research and Evaluation Convocations will provide a principal means of data collection. Encouraging local capacity for ongoing research work at the individual community level will be a part of our focus. To this end, the research and evaluation conducted as well as the guides and instruments that are developed will be shared with local sites.

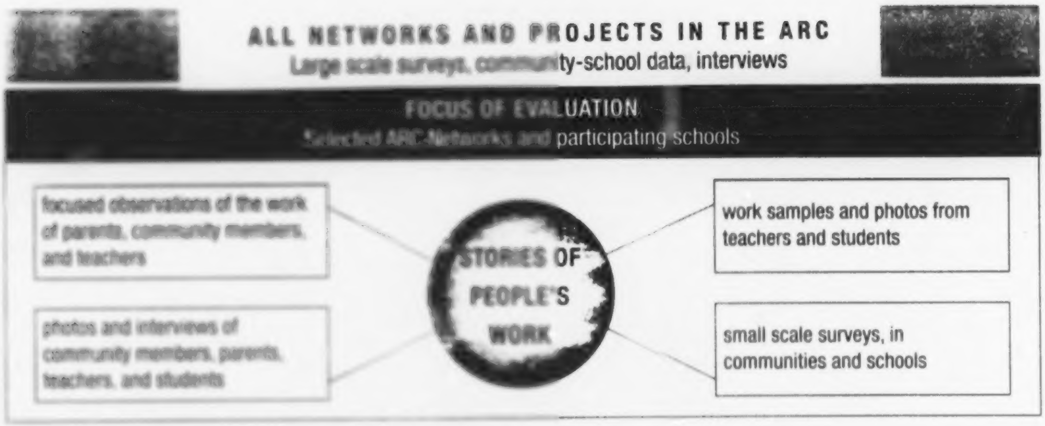
ALL NETWORKS AND PROJECTS IN THE ARC
Large scale surveys, community-school data, interviews
FOCUS OF EVALUATION
Selected ARC-Networks and participating schools
focused observations of the work of parents, community members, and teachers
photos and interviews of community members, parents, teachers, and students
STORIES OF PEOPLE'S WORK
work samples and photos from teachers and students
small scale surveys, in communities and schools

FIGURE 1. The Annenberg Rural Challenge Evaluation Design

DESIGN AREAS OF STUDY, GOALS, AND DATA COLLECTION FORMATS

The framework of this evaluation is designed to learn about five areas of the Annenberg Rural Challenge that influence rural schooling:

1. Student Learning;
2. the Schooling Process;
3. Community-School Integration;
4. Network/Project Activities; and
5. Policy Development.

Figure 2 illustrates the structure of the design—linking areas of study, goals and formats for data collection.

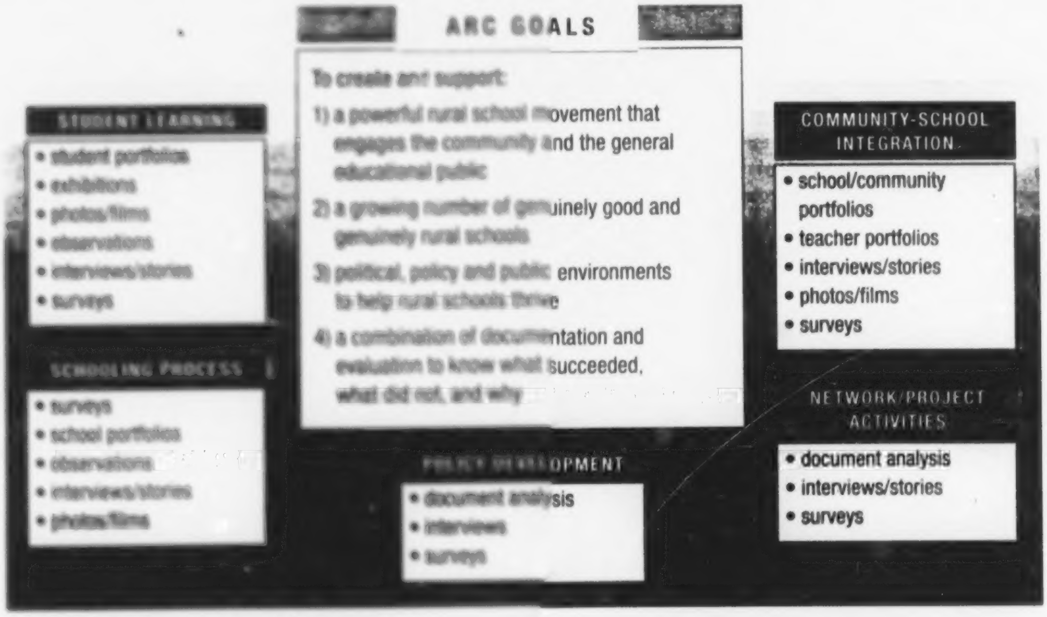
ARC GOALS
To create and support:
1) a powerful rural school movement that engages the community and the general educational public
2) a growing number of genuinely good and genuinely rural schools
3) political, policy and public environments to help rural schools thrive
4) a combination of documentation and evaluation to know what succeeded, what did not, and why
STUDENT LEARNING
• student portfolios
• exhibitions
• photos/films
• observations
• interviews/stories
• surveys
SCHOOLING PROCESS
• surveys
• school portfolios
• observations
• interviews/stories
• photos/films
COMMUNITY-SCHOOL INTEGRATION
• school/community portfolios
• teacher portfolios
• interviews/stories
• photos/films
• surveys
NETWORK/PROJECT ACTIVITIES
• document analysis
• interviews/stories
• surveys
POLICY DEVELOPMENT
• document analysis
• interviews
• surveys

FIGURE 2. The Annenberg Rural Challenge Goals

To address the foregoing areas of inquiry and to assess the Annenberg Rural Challenge's (ARC) progress towards its goals, we have proposed a plan for data collection that is based on a longitudinal design, multiple sources of complementary data, and sampling of selected states, networks, communities, schools and classrooms.

This evaluation plan proposes to collect and report data from all of the Annenberg Rural Challenge sites comparing and analyzing this more general information with descriptive data from selected sites. Utilization of local research collaborators from the community and local field researchers from neighboring educational institutions will allow firsthand rural data collection which will be centrally shared with the Harvard Research/ Evaluation Team in order to allow for a composite of stories and information that comprehensively addresses "genuinely good rural schools."

Table 1 outlines the scope and scale of sample site data collection which will provide information on: 1) student learning; 2) the schooling process; 3) community-school integration; 4) project and network activities; and 5) policy development.

TABLE 1: FORMATS FOR DATA COLLECTION

AREA OF INQUIRY	SAMPLE NUMBERS	PORTFOLIOS COLLECTIONS	OBSERVATIONS	INTERVIEWS	SURVEYS
STUDENT LEARNING AND GROWTH	all classrooms in 20–25 selected schools 6–8 students 6–8 parents 4–6 teachers	student portfolios teacher portfolios	classroom observations school observations	students teachers parents community members	students teachers parents community members
SCHOOLING PROCESS	20–25 schools (1–3 per network)	community-school portfolios	school observations teacher observations journals photographs videos	students teachers parents community members	students teachers parents community members
COMMUNITY-SCHOOL INTEGRATION	20–25 schools (1–3 per network) as above	community-school portfolios as above	student performance observations community event observations photo and video documentation	students teachers parents community members	students teachers parents community members
NETWORK/ PROJECT ACTIVITIES	10–12 networks	document collection from activities and accounts of key project and network staff		key project and network staff school staff parents community members	key project and network staff school staff parents community members
POLICY DEVELOPMENT	10–12 states	document collection from state departments		key state level and network staff school staff parents community members	key state level and network staff school staff parents community members

The selected sites will be those most representative of sites supported by the Annenberg Rural Challenge. We will sample 10–12 networks from the 1996–1998 cycles of implementation grant recipients. We anticipate sampling 20–25 schools, 1–3 from each network. Student portfolios will include student work samples. Community-school portfolios will include samples from student work, celebrations, entrepreneurial community projects, attendance and participation records, and more.

Networks will be selected according to:

- objectives and approaches, or espoused "theories of action" as reflected in their grant proposals and community activities;
- network organization, membership and external partners;
- community context; and
- demographic characteristics.

Specifically, as noted in Table 1, we will sample networks, communities and schools within networks, and classrooms within schools for mid-level longitudinal analysis. These analyses will provide detailed information about the community-school development process, the development of support systems (Network, Project, and Institutional level) and the relationship between the two in the achievement of the Challenge's primary goals. These analyses will provide the bases for interpretation and explanation of the findings from project-level analyses, as well as survey and archival data. The evaluative data, outlined in Table 1, will be collected with the help of field researchers, school community people, local community members and the ARC Evaluation Team during years 1–4 of this evaluation research.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

What will Rural Schools and Communities be like because of the ARC? What would we expect to see in the Annenberg Rural Challenge Site Schools? We would expect rural schools to be centers of revitalization of a rural environment, economically and socially. More specifically, we expect to see, in genuinely good schools serving and served by rural communities, curriculum reflective of the local culture—embodied in a pedagogy of place. Schools will be involved with community development and economic development. Students will be responsible, generous and connected and their intellectual work won't be in conflict with a local focus.

Appendix B: Methodology

METHODOLOGY FOR THIS REPORT

We determined in the summer of 1997 that our Winter 1998/99 report should focus on student work and the connection of student work to local communities. This seemed a natural outgrowth of our inquiries the previous year around community-school exchange. By emphasizing student work, we believed we could get closer to the schooling process, enlarge understandings of a pedagogy/curriculum of place and its effects on student work and provide a variety of examples that might help Rural Challenge participants see larger possibilities for learning and teaching.

As a preview of this work, we met in a post-1997 Rendezvous workshop with teachers, school administrators and community people from each of our original nine focus sites to discuss portfolios and provide everyone some experience looking at and describing student work. We also provided everyone with a "resource kit" which featured a variety of ways that teachers might collect, read and assess student work as well as encourage student self-evaluation of work.

Through our Research Associates, we asked selected teachers in our focus sites to maintain portfolios of student work and requested that they be brought to our summer convocations for review. We provided the following directions:

- In each of the schools, 4–6 teachers should collect work (6–8 pieces) for six representative students.
  Elementary teachers: would include something relating to math and language arts as well as project work (which might also have a math/language arts base.)
  Middle School/High School teachers: would collect around their particular subject areas.
- Samples of work should include what is typical and what is particularly challenging; work done early in the year and work done later in the year.
- All work should be accompanied by some clear indication of the activity (what it is related to), its purposes, its tie to the ongoing curriculum (a context).
- If possible, the work should also be accompanied by student statements about the work— What they did? How they did it? and What they learned?

In some of the settings, portfolios are regularly maintained so our request was not much of an addition. In other settings, it represented some additional work (possibly a burden). While we sent to the sites information about portfolios, ways of using them productively, and helpful guides for their review, including a new book on portfolios and their use, we made clear that our purpose for reviewing student work was to better describe elements of the schooling process. Some of our questions were: What is the nature of the learning environment? How much complexity is embedded in student work (which speaks to the nature of the ongoing curriculum)? Does the work convey attention to/thoughtfulness about what is local? Does the work convey a concern for high quality (something beyond the usual)?

We also asked our Research Associates to observe in classrooms and engage students and teachers about the nature of ongoing student work. We provided some of the following questions to guide the observations and interviews:

- Are students engaged?
- Are they becoming serious readers and writers?
- Are they becoming more confident about themselves as learners?
- Do instructional practices lead to students becoming more active, developing inquiry skills, using technologies to extend learning?
- What can be said about the traditional expectations—reading, writing, dispositions toward inquiry, constructive uses of resources, independence, problem solving?
- Are students becoming more involved academically and in civic terms with their communities—their histories, arts, cultural roots, flora and fauna, economic structures, politics, potential future, etc.?

Our Research Associates are in their respective focus sites from 15–24 days each year. They are well known there and have, over time, built productive relationships. Their reports are often filled with accounts of student work, samples of student work and transcriptions of interviews. These reports are read carefully and summarized by our Research Assistants based in Cambridge.

We also brought our Research Associates together in February 1998 around what they were learning about student work. Each brought samples of student work from their sites which we reviewed with our Protocol, in effect testing the Protocol prior to its use in the Summer Convocations.

In preparation for our regional Research and Evaluation Convocations, held at Boiling Springs, North Carolina, Granby, Colorado and Cannon Beach, Oregon, we made clear to participants (who were scheduled to come from all Rural Challenge sites) of our interest in student work and asked that examples of student work be brought to the convocations.

At the convocations, we entered into a process of collaborative review of student work that has become fairly typical in settings which make heavy use of portfolios. Each table contained a comprehensive example of a curriculum project—the participants included the teacher(s) and students who were involved with the work along with groups of other teachers, students, and community people. Facilitated by Vito Perrone, the following protocol was used to guide the review.

PROTOCOL FOR STUDENT WORK

1. Look at the work.
   In this preliminary period, there is no conversation. Everyone looks carefully at the work, getting a sense of its shape, the content, the questions guiding it, how it was done, the presentation.
2. Describe the work.
   Each person viewing the work describes the work. What each sees. What stands out for each viewer.
3. Response of person close to the work. This person describes the work, how it was created, how it was evaluated.
   The person presenting also comments on the motivations, purposes, and decisions made along the way.
   After the descriptions, observers ask questions about the work and the description of the work.
4. The following questions guide the next segment of discussions.
   What does the work tell us about the student/students?
   What does it tell us about the classroom/school?
   What does the work tell us about the community?

5. The following questions are directed to everyone involved in the review of student work.
   What would cause you to say the work is challenging? Of high quality?
   What is the evidence of schools and communities being connected?
   What does the work suggest about the instructional program?
   What content is most represented?

All of the work and related discussions at these Research and Evaluation Convocations were recorded by both video- and audiotape. These were all subjected to a focused review by our research staff.

In addition to these focused reviews of student work, we also engaged in small focus groups with teachers, parents, students and community people to discuss student work and schools and communities growing together. For this purpose, in addition to the regional meetings outlined above, we also participated in a Mid-West regional meeting sponsored by the Nebraska and South Dakota projects, the National Rendezvous, and the summer program of Bread Loaf. Our focused conversations involved a total of 630 Rural Challenge participants. The Protocols which guided the focused discussions are as follows:

DOCUMENTING STUDENT LEARNING

The Rural Challenge is intended to support the growth, the well-being of schools and communities. In this conversation, we are focusing on student learning, mostly what goes on in relation to classrooms and schools—though we recognize that some of the active work goes on outside the school (and we will discuss more of this at a later time). We are particularly interested in knowing how the Rural Challenge work has affected the work students do, the things they study, the questions they ask, the materials they use. We want to know if the Rural Challenge work is raising the level of student interest in school; if it is causing students to do higher quality work and helping them appreciate more their places/communities.

We begin with descriptions of the Rural Challenge work.

I. Describe the Rural Challenge work in your school/community:
   1. What are the themes, community issues?
   2. What content areas are represented?
   3. What technical and technological skills are being developed?
   4. What is the ratio of time inside/outside the classroom?
   5. What grade level(s), special constituencies are involved (e.g. high risk students)?
   6. How long do the projects run?
   7. What is the community involvement?
   8. Who controls the curriculum development: teacher, students, community people?

II. What would cause you to say things are getting better academically in this school/classroom? (e.g. What was it like before? Level of student engagement, attendance patterns, increase in collaborations among classes, etc.)
   1. What would cause you to say kids are becoming better readers, writers, posers of questions in mathematics, science, history, local citizens?
   2. What kinds of things have students become more interested in learning about?
   3. What causes you to say the work is getting better? How do you assess student learning?

III. What are the barriers and opportunities to implementing Rural Challenge work school- or district-wide? (e.g. state standards, standardized tests, leadership transitions)?

DOCUMENTING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES GROWING TOGETHER

As noted in the earlier discussion, the Rural Challenge is intended to support the growth, the well-being of schools and communities. In this conversation, we are focusing on the ways schools and communities are growing together. The premise is that the Rural Challenge will not have succeeded if schools improve and communities deteriorate, become less desirable places to live in. We want to learn about points of interchange, ways that communities become more vital, are more integral to what goes on in schools. Are attitudes about the place becoming more positive? Are community people active participants in schools? Are the schools genuine community institutions; institutions to be cared about?

We begin by asking you to describe your places—where are they, what is distinctive about them, what do you most value and what do you worry about?

I. Where is this place geographically?

II. Describe how schools and communities are engaging one another in a process of mutual learning and growth.

   1. If you could name a pivotal event or identify the person(s) that was the inspiration for the Rural Challenge initiative in your area, what/who would that be?
      a) Who is most responsible for keeping the movement alive?
   2. Since the Rural Challenge began in your community, what has changed?
      a) in schools related to community
      b) in the community related to schools
      c) in the mindsets or perceptions of people living here about the relationship between school and community

III. Do you think that as a result of the Rural Challenge your schools are getting stronger and your community growing more vital?

   1. If so, why?
   2. If not, what are the barriers?
      a) *Structural* (local government, outside influence, state/national standards)
      b) *Financial*
      c) *Attitudinal* (perceptions of the RC and its goals)
      d) *Communal* (increasing the involvement from more community groups)

All of the focused conversations were audiotaped for later transcription. The transcriptions were coded against the themes which became the organizational structure of this report. The enormous amount of rich material the transcriptions provided necessitated that we be very selective in our use.

We also reviewed reports prepared by Rural Challenge Stewards and reports of Rural Challenge Project Directors around our focus on student work and schools and communities growing together. These reports proved particularly instructive.

Most Rural Challenge sites have developed web pages that contain student work samples—one of the ways that Rural Challenge sites are organizing to share work with one another and learn from one another. We systematically reviewed the student work on the websites, using our basic protocol (described above).

Lastly, we prepared a survey that complements our focused interviews and observations. The survey was given to selected Rural Challenge participants across the country as well as to all participants at our various summer regional gatherings. Those completing the survey were, we believe, representative of the Rural Challenge. Overall, the data are interesting and corroborate much that we observed. The survey will be given to all participants in the Rural Challenge in February 1999 with a comprehensive report scheduled for release in May 1999.

Appendix C: Rural Challenge Projects

Alaska Rural Challenge/ Rural Systemic Initiative
Alaska Federation of Natives Inc.
1577 C Street, Suite 300
Anchorage, AK 99501
phone: 907-274-3611

Appalachian Rural Education Network
Appalachian Center, University of
Kentucky, 624 Maxwelton Court
Lexington, KY 40506
phone: 606-257-4852

Bread Loaf School of English
Middlebury College
Middlebury, VT 05753
phone: 802-443-5418

Center for School Change
University of Minnesota, 234
Humphrey Institute, 301 19th Avenue
South, Minneapolis, MN 55455-0429
phone: 612-626-1834

Circles of Wisdom
Santa Fe Indian School,
1502 Cerrillos Road, Box 5340
Santa Fe, NM 87530
phone: 505-989-6340

Coalition of Alabamians Reforming Education (CARE)
PO Box 2516, Selma, AL 36702
phone: 334-872-7280

Colorado Rural Charter Schools Network
PO Box 420, 37888 U.S. Highway 24
Lake George, CO 80827
phone: 719-748-3911

Communities Creating Connections
PO Box 356, Elk City, ID 83525
phone: 208-842-2218

Kickapoo River Institute
PO Box 68
Gays Mills, WI 54613
phone: 608-735-4318

League of Professional Schools
Program for School Improvement
124 Algerhold Hall, University of
Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-7108
phone: 706-542-2516

Learn in Beauty
Navajo Nation, Division of
Dine Education, PO Box 4575
Window Rock, AZ 86515
phone: 520-871-7790

Llano Grande center for Research and Development
PO Box 127, Edcouch, TX 78538
phone: 956-262-4474

Mariposa County Rural Challenge
PO Box 8, Mariposa County Unified
School District, Mariposa, CA 95338
phone: 209-742-0250

National Writing Project
School of Education, 5511 Tolman
Hall #1670, Berkeley, CA 94720-1670
phone: 510-642-0963

New Paradigm Partners
Rural Challenge Project, PO Box 86
Tony, WI 54563
phone: 715-532-7760

North Coast Rural Challenge Network
Mendocino Unified School District
PO Box 1154, Mendocino, CA 95460
phone: 707-937-5868

Partnership Rural Initiative in Maine
301C Bailey Hall
Gorham, Maine 04038
phone: 207-780-5669

Program for the Academic and Cultural Enhancement of Rural Schools (PACERS)
Program for Rural Services
and Research, 205 University
Blvd., East, Box 870372
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0372
phone: 205-348-6432

Program for Rural School and Community Renewal
College of Education and Counseling
Box 507, Wenona Hall, Room 103
South Dakota State University
Brookings, SD 57005-0095
phone: 605-688-6306

Project Albemarle Learning Center (Project ALC)
131 Morristown Road
Edenton, NC 27932
phone: 252-482-5769

Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning Enterprises (REAL Enterprises)
115 Market Street, Suite 320
Durham, NC 27701
phone: 919-688-7325

Schleicher County
Schleicher County ISD, PO Box W
Eldorado, TX 76936
phone: 915-853-2514

School at the Center
Center for Curriculum and
Instruction, 119 Henzlik Hall
PO Box 880355, Lincoln, NE 68588
phone: 402-472-6395

The Selborne Project
Roger Tory Peterson Institute of
Natural History, 311 Curtis Street
Jamestown, NY 14701-9620
phone: 716-665-2473

Southern Initiative of the Algebra Project
PO Box 13917, Jackson, MS 39286
phone: 601-362-0144

Stewards of the High Plains
Idalia School, PO Box 40
Idalia, CO 80735
phone: 970-354-7298

Tenn-Ga-Lina
220 Brookstone Lane
Murphy, NC 28906
phone: 828-837-2968

Tillamook County Education Consortium
Tillamook School District, 2405 Fifth
Street, Tillamook, OR 97141
phone: 503-842-1214

Ventura County
Ojai Unified School District
414 East Ojai Avenue, Ojai, CA 93023
phone: 805-640-4300

Vermont Rural Partnership
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620
phone: 802-828-3125

Walden's Ridge
Walden's Ridge Cluster
PO Box 303, 1119 Knoxville Highway
Wartburg, TN 37887
phone: 423-346-6616

West Virginia Stewardship Collaborative
HC 63, Box 73, Moyers, WV 26815
phone: 304-249-5200

Yampa Valley Legacy Education Initiative
PO Box 774368,
Steamboat Springs, CO 80477
phone: 970-879-4296

Yuba Watershed Alliance
PO Box 185, Camptonville, CA 95922
phone: 530-288-3451

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